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# Fulfilling an Institutional and Public Good Mission: A Case Study of Access

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FULFILLING AN INSTITUTIONAL AND PUBLIC GOOD MISSION:

A CASE STUDY OF ACCESS

by

Renee F. Batman

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Educational Studies

(Educational Leadership and Higher Education)

Under the Supervision of Professor Brent Cejda and Rachelle Winkle-Wagner

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2013

FULFILLING AN INSTITUTIONAL AND PUBLIC GOOD MISSION:

A CASE STUDY OF ACCESS

Renee F. Batman, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2013

Advisors: Brent Cejda and Rachelle Winkle-Wagner

Access to higher education has been and remains a critical issue, yet research typically focuses on students and programs which may overlook the role of the faculty. Through an in-depth case study, the perspectives of tenured and tenure-track faculty at a predominately White, Midwestern land-grant, research institution are described as they relate to issues of student access to higher education. The context of the case was instrumental in understanding faculty perspectives of access and centered on the fundamental notion of education as public good and its association with institutional history and mission. The findings suggest that faculty members uphold the belief of higher education serving a greater purpose, or public good. Faculty members described the institution's responsibility to the public and the state through their understanding of facilitating accessibility and maintaining affordability. However, faculty participants rarely saw themselves as actors in the issue of access.

The faculty held many expectations for students, some of which were reflected in the access literature and models, such as academic preparation and ability to navigate the university. Other expectations are absent in the access literature. Faculty members

expect students to demonstrate a certain cultural capital and rewards students who demonstrate these skills, behaviors and knowledge. These expectations are often implicit and hidden from students. These finding suggests that some students or groups of students, especially those that face the biggest barriers to higher education, have the potential to be overlooked without advocacy and faculty buy-in.

This study also advances the emerging theory of Academic Capital Formation (St. John et al., 2011) by presenting the faculty's view of access. The findings suggest that Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "field" is critically important to the full understanding of nuances in the access puzzle. Additionally, the foundational concept of social reproduction versus transformation appeared to frame the issues of access found within human, social and cultural capital theories.

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not only allowed me, but encouraged me to push through the inevitable crunch times during the dissertation. Thank you.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Higher education in America began as accessible only to the elite, but two federal initiatives significantly changed history and opened access to a broad population of students. First, the Morrill Act of 1862 created the nation's land grant institutions founded on principles of access (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, n.d.) and second, the Basic Opportunity Grant Program, established in 1972 and known today as the Pell Grant program, significantly expanded access to education by providing students with grant aid that could be used at the college or university of their choice (St. John, 2003). Initiatives such as these transformed American higher education from an elite system to a mass system of higher education and one of envy for other countries (Shapiro, 2005). In particular, the modern American research university was characterized as a highly decentralized system devoted to the masses, if not universal education where, for over long periods of time and for a wide variety of reasons, public and private support for the research university continued to grow (Shapiro, 2005). However, this commitment to access recently has been called into question amidst a troublesome economy, changing political landscape, and unprecedented demands on institutional resources (Couturier, 2006; Jones & Wellman, 2010; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; St. John et al., 2011; Weisbrod et al., 2008). This study examines access from the

perspective of an overlooked stakeholder group, tenured and tenure-track faculty at a predominately White, Midwestern land-grant, research extensive institution.

Scholarship on access typically focuses on students and programs (e.g. St. John, Hu & Fisher, 2011) which may overlook a key role that the faculty play in influencing issues related to access and students' daily lives. Scholarly work on the current environment of higher education overlooks the implications for underrepresented students, those most susceptible to negative effects from changes in an access mission. This project takes a unique approach to studying access by investigating the perspectives of tenured and pre-tenured faculty at a predominately White, Midwestern land-grant, research extensive institution. A commitment to access is rooted in notions of the public good mission and implies providing an opportunity to pursue postsecondary education to all students regardless of background and ability to pay (Etzioni, 1971; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The faculty potentially influences the public good mission through the opportunities for students that they structure and control. However, little is known about their perceptions with regard to the public good and access.

### **Problem Statement**

In a 2006 report by the Institute for Higher Education Policy, the author warned that the significant changes in higher education and their effects represented a "convergence" of trends that could threaten access to the American higher education

system. Such changes have prompted aggressive discourse about the status of education in America. As a result, policy makers are looking more closely at the system of education including the roles of the different sectors of higher education (Tierney & Hentschke, 2011), academic preparation of students and K-12 teacher preparedness (Perna, 2008; St. John et al., 2011), and appropriate funding strategies and mechanisms to support education (Weisbrod et al., 2008). There is a need for empirical research to inform this discourse, policy development and analysis (St. John & Musoba, 2011). St. John and Musoba (2011) emphasized that the arena of public policy has changed and extended periods of time between policy development and implementation is no longer the case. Instead, economic and political conditions have placed significant strain on these processes and policy makers must act quickly to see their policy come to fruition (St. John & Musoba, 2011). Often it is faculty-led research that informs policy development (St. John & Musoba, 2011), yet the faculty voice in the access problem is missing.

Universities also are reacting in new ways to the political and economic challenges. For example, significant declines in state appropriations are directly related to an institutional pursuit of revenue generation. Examples of these activities include, increasing tuition rates or using differential tuition rates, recruiting more “full-pay” students, redirecting aid into merit-based versus need-based criteria, aggressively pursuing external research grants, among others (Slaughter & Rhodes, 2004; Weisbrod



et al., 2008). Some public institutions are searching for ways to become more privatized or self-sufficient and hoping to avoid political legislative processes for setting tuition rates (Shapiro, 2005). These issues contribute to a contentious environment on campus where faculty are asked to produce nationally-recognized research, advise and teach undergraduates, mentor graduate students, write and secure external funding, and provide service to their communities (Gumport & Zemsky, 2003; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), but little is known about faculty perspectives of access amidst their current environment. Changes in access ultimately affect faculty because it changes the students who are in their classrooms, who are available to conduct research, and who will benefit from their research.

Similarly, the nation and state face multiple challenges and difficult decisions where an aging population, a renewed focus on K-12 education, the health care debate, prisons, infrastructure, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, and the environment are all competing with higher education for limited resources. Combined with the shift to a conservative political ideology (Thomas & Perna, 2004; St. John, 2003), the grim outlook for underrepresented students heightens the need for rigorous study of access within the context of today's higher education landscape where decisions in the public policy arena directly influence who may have access to higher education in the future.

At any given institution, quantitative measures such as percent increase in external grants received or number of submitted proposals could provide some insight

into faculty motivations or foci, but quantitative proxies provide an incomplete picture. Qualitative analysis is needed to fully understand the faculty perspective and to evaluate this perspective in terms of implications for higher education and society and for students. A qualitative approach also is needed when theories are being developed or are used in a different context (Creswell, 2007) which is the case for the emerging academic capital formation framework used in this study. The findings also were expected to be helpful for higher education policy makers as a whole and for institutions beyond land-grant, research universities.

### **Study Purpose and Significance**

A more comprehensive understanding of the access problem was sought in this research. More specifically, the purpose of the study was to explore access from the perspective of tenured and tenure-track faculty members at a predominately White, Midwestern, public land-grant, research extensive institution.

Much has been written about access; however, the perspective of faculty has been overlooked. Moreover, much of the literature has only explored one aspect of the access issue and scholars today are calling for more comprehensive and inclusive approaches to the issue (Tierney & Venegas, 2009; Thomas & Perna, 2004; St. John et al., 2011). Additionally, a substantial amount of scholarly writing has addressed the current landscape and public policy environment, but empirical and in-depth information remains limited. The significance of this study is the discovery of the faculty

perspective, using qualitative methods and within multiple disciplines at a land-grant, research institution substantially affected by the new landscape facing higher education.

### **Research Question and Study Design**

The perspective of tenured and tenure-track faculty was examined using the following research question as a guide: How do faculty members at a predominately White, Midwestern land-grant, research extensive university perceive access to higher education?

A qualitative study design was used for data collection. Qualitative methods were selected because of the complexity of the issue at hand, the need to create rich descriptions or a holistic account of the phenomena - the human element required to make meaning from the findings - and “real-world” setting in which the research took place (Creswell, 2007). In addition, qualitative methods were most appropriate to allow for an emergent, flexible and responsive research design (Merriam, 2009). Because this study was interested in uncovering and understanding the perspectives of faculty participants, and these characteristics provided the necessary methodological tools to generate new information about access and the perspective of tenured and tenure-track faculty members. The qualitative design allowed for in-depth exploration where faculty perspectives, beliefs and values could emerge.

In aiming to understand the perspectives of tenured and tenure-track faculty at a land-grant, research institution and account for the current conditions facing higher

education, this study used the case study tradition. It also incorporated a constructivist epistemology, a pragmatic worldview and elements of postmodern theoretical thought. A single institution was purposively selected as an instrumental case (Stake, 1995) and served as the research site. The case was bounded by the institution, participants, and duration in the field. Sample selection within the case included documents, observations, and semi-structured in-depth interviews with tenured or tenure-track faculty members. Documents were limited to secondary institutional data sources and personal documents created by faculty; observations included department faculty-led meetings.

Participants were purposefully selected based on criterion, maximum variation, and stratified purposeful sampling strategies (Creswell, 2007). The criterion used included faculty rank, years of service and interaction with undergraduates. For example, participants needed to be a tenured or tenure-track faculty with a minimum of two years of service at the institution and have taught an undergraduate course in the last two years. A sample stratified by discipline, educational background, years of service, apportionment, and gender was achieved. Data collection took place during the summer and fall terms of 2012. Thirty-one tenured or tenure-track faculty members participated in the study and five department observations were conducted. Data analyses, additional methodological information, and an overview of limitations and delimitations are provided in Chapter Three.

### **Definition of Concepts**

This study explored perspectives of access from the viewpoint of tenured and tenure-track faculty members at a predominately White, land-grant, research extensive institution located in the Midwest. Key concepts included tenured/tenure-track faculty, access to higher education, and underrepresented students.

Tenured/tenure-track faculty: Because the employment terms of faculty are in a state of flux, those considered tenured or tenure-track faculty members at one institution may differ at another. In this study, the group of tenured and tenure-track faculty members does not include equivalent rank faculty, such as professors of practice or research faculty. No tenured or tenure-track faculty had term-based positions. In addition, responsibilities or apportionment assignments had to be primarily in research, teaching or service. Individuals with a major administrative appointment, including college deans, chairs and vice chairs were not included in this group. Many participants had previous administrative experience.

Access to higher education: Access to higher education is the process of enabling entry for students into postsecondary education, which could be at two-year or four-year, public, private or for-profit institutions. As Etzioni concluded in 1971, this does not suggest open admissions to anyone, but that existing programs strive to expand the basis of admissions. Other scholars have approached access similarly with

the assumption that access should be increased to the widest range of students possible (e.g. Perna, 2008; St. John, 2003). Often studies focus on the student groups that are known to experience barriers to securing access to postsecondary education, including first-generation, low-income and students of color. Another aspect of access includes the key opportunities that facilitate access and success. Faculty members often influence and control these opportunities (e.g. outreach activities, research experiences, etc.), which is further analyzed in this study.

Underrepresented students: Students who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education based on racial and ethnic group background makeup this group. The ethnic and racial groups of Latinos and African Americans are typically the most studied or cited in the access literature, but Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, and Pacific Islanders are also considered underrepresented in postsecondary education. At times, this term could also refer to low-income and first-generation students who are also underrepresented in education.

### **Dissertation Overview**

The next chapter includes a review of the relevant literature and theory applied in the conception and construction of this study. Specifically, a review of the access literature, analysis of the current landscape of higher education, and brief summary of studies on faculty perspectives and culture are examined. Theoretical frameworks including academic capitalism, the two-good framework, and academic capital

formation are described in Chapter Two. Chapter Three focuses on the research design and methods and includes sections on researcher epistemology and positionality. A summary of a pilot study used to inform the current study is also included in Chapter Three. The findings are presented in narrative form in Chapter Four. Chapter Five contains the summary, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations. Together these chapters form the final report of this study of faculty perspectives of the access puzzle.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

In this chapter literature is explored and theory is considered in order to outline the foundational assumptions that guided the research questions, design and interpretations of the present study (Merriam, 2009). The literature and theoretical frameworks also serve to position the present study in how it contributes to the literature or advances, refines, or revises what is already known (Merriam, 2009). Here the chapter is divided into two sections: 1) relevant literature and 2) theoretical framework.

The literature reviewed includes three subsections which illustrates the significance of the study and provides the basis of the research problem. First, the current landscape of higher education is described, then a review of access literature is addressed, followed a brief overview of research on faculty and faculty culture is included. The topics and concepts illustrate the complexity of the issue and provide the context for this study. They center on the history of access and findings that consider the role actors and public policy play in meeting the challenges. The current landscape of higher education takes into consideration the market demands and pressures and outcomes that could be linked to issues of access, especially where implications regarding public policy and policy ideology are relevant. Public policy connects market demands to institutions because public policy is a key tool used in instances where there



are imperfections in the market (Toutkoushian & Shafiq, 2010). Because public policy in higher education has been used to alleviate inequality in the market place, most notably through financial aid policy (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1998), studies regarding financial access are a focus in the literature review. Finally, the literature on faculty and faculty culture provides information about participants and insight into how their role and work influences institutions.

Next, the theoretical frameworks used to guide this study are detailed and they include three theories: 1) Slaughter and Rhoades' premise of academic capitalism; 2) Weisbrod, Ballou and Asch's two-good framework; and 3) St. John, Hu and Fisher's emerging theory of academic capital formation. Academic capitalism and the two-good framework provide a theoretical basis for understanding the current environment of higher education and the complexity of the issues at play. Academic capital formation provides a comprehensive approach to exploring access but considers the environment of higher education in more limited way. Together these theoretical considerations allow for an investigation of what is happening (academic capitalism), why it is happening (two-good framework), and how the actors, or faculty members, can play a role in access (academic capital formation). The theories position the study in well-established conceptual ideals.

I conducted the literature review through use of robust multi-database searches using keywords such as "access," "public good," "public policy," "financial aid,"

“institutional aid,” “merit vs. need-based aid,” “capitalism,” “college choice” and combinations of similar themes to understand access. I also conducted searches on topics of institutional environments, state and federal roles in education, the public versus private good debate to provide the necessary information for the setting of the study. Studies or scholarly work regarding land-grant institutions and research universities were specifically targeted for inclusion in this review. A final search for studies about tenured and tenure-track faculty and faculty culture provided an understanding of the study’s participants. Project Muse, JSTOR, PsycInfo, and EBSCOR databases, and Academic and Business Search Premier returned the most results.

Much of the literature reviewed, outside of access literature, included scholarly pieces where claims were made based on broad data measurements or a scholar’s life work. Empirical research however, was targeted and those studies that drew conclusions regarding public policy directly or indirectly, and those whose findings had market implications were included.

The purpose of this study is to explore faculty perceptions of access. In this exploration, I fill an important gap in the literature where faculty perspectives are overlooked in the access literature and limited empirical work is focused on the landscape affecting access. I also apply an approach to using theoretical frameworks in an effort to build a more comprehensive understanding of access and extend the emerging theory of academic capital formation.

## **Changing Landscape of Higher Education**

A review of the higher education landscape including institutional environments and state and federal roles in education with consideration of market pressures and resource constraints, and public policy and policy ideology are described below. Issues related to life in the academy, including the faculty perspective is considered in these studies. However, the studies are less likely to be directly tied to issues of access, the central phenomenon of this study. Still, this section provides the context in which the problems of access reside. The literature reviewed also grounds the study of tenured and tenure-track faculty perspective by establishing the role they play in the larger circumstances of institutional and state environments. This section demonstrates the complexity of the access problem and provides evidence of the need to explore a faculty understanding of issues related to access.

### **Tenuous Institutional Environments: Competing Demands and Limited Resources**

Many scholars agree the higher education environment has changed as a result of the extraordinary changes in society and around the globe (Chen & DesJardins, 2010; Jones & Wellman, 2010; Paulsen & St. John, 2002; Shapiro, 2005; Slaughter & Rhoads, 2004; Tierney, 1999; Weerts & Ronca, 2006; Zemsky, 1998). Institutions of higher education are being pressured to change and adapt to this new environment because of competing demands and limited resources (Couturier, 2006; Shapiro, 2005; St. John et al., 2011). The pressures are not limited to one sector or type of institution, as

competition for students, faculty, revenue, and prestige are issues virtually all institutions confront (Couturier, 2006). However, research institutions play significant roles in moving society forward which comes with responsibilities to the world of scholarship and to the cultural and social aspirations for future generations (Shapiro, 2005). Land-grant institutions also are committed to their foundational roots of service to the state and access to a majority of the state's population.

Couturier (2006) argues that these pressures have occurred because federal and state policymakers want to see market economies work in higher education. However, as others have argued there are market imperfections and inadequacies where higher education differs from a business in the private sector and these relate to the mission of colleges and universities and the role education plays in society (Couturier, 2006; Shapiro, 2005; Tierney, 1999). Colleges and universities have goals and missions that emphasize education, research, and public service as part of a public good. Colleges and universities also exist within a market forcing them to react to various pressures on the demand side of the equation (Couturier, 2006). Shapiro (2005) warns that difficulties exist on both sides of the equation stating, "Institutions risk being overwhelmed by values and commitments...or caught up both in the rampant materialism of our age and the incentive structure of private markets" (pp. xiii-xiv). And Jones and Wellman (2010) warn that "those students denied access in touch economic times don't simply postpone college entrance; most forgo it" (p. 8).

The expectations for higher education are tremendous. In the preface of Couturier's 2006 report, the authors states that "one of the greatest advantages Americans hold in global competition is that we know the importance of providing higher education to the widest possible cross section of our population." Weisbrod and associates (2008) noted, "higher education is caught up in conflicting political pressures that are increasingly relying on it to solve economic and social problems, expand broad missions beyond high school graduates to older adults making adjustments to labor markets, expand educational services while reducing revenue from tuition and to avoid pursuit of other revenue sources" (p. 1). Shapiro (2005) concurs that higher education serves society as both a responsive servant and a thoughtful critic; furthermore, he claims that the modern research university must provide educational programs in high demand but also raise questions that society might not want to ask and generate new ideas that help invent the future. Yet, as Tierney (1999) states, "academe is not a miracle cure...colleges and universities exist in society within an economic structure" (p. 5). As these scholars note, while the capitalist market low-wage employment will always be needed, the shift to the knowledge economy demands more skilled workers (Callahan & Finney, 2002; Tierney, 1999). Shapiro (2005) argues that in contemporary times such as these, a university education is a requirement of a "fully expressed citizenship" (p. 8). Society and industry are also highly dependent upon the university's products and services such as advanced training, various types of expertise and new

ideas (Shapiro, 2005). The expectations for innovation, economic development and self-sustaining research funding add pressure to the university and its faculty, especially those at research universities (Shapiro, 2005; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Other changes adding to the complexity of today's university landscape include the shift of faculty loyalty to a discipline versus institution (Clark, 2004; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004); increased reliance on adjunct or contract faculty (Gumport & Zemksy, 2003; Jones & Wellman, 2010; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004); "mission creep" and increased focus on rankings (Jones & Wellman, 2010; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Tierney, 1999); consumerism of students and their parents (Couturier, 2006); decreased length of college presidents' tenure (Tierney, 1999); rising cost of tuition (Weisbrod et al., 2008); changing demographics of incoming students (Chen & DesJardins, 2010; Paulsen & St. John, 2002; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Zemsky, 1998); and reductions in state support and changes in funding structures (Jones & Wellman, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2006).

Students and parents are paying more out-of-pocket costs to universities in tuition and fees and as a result, are demanding more in return for their investment (Couturier, 2006). Examples of such requests include expanded career and placement support, study abroad and global engagement opportunities, housing accommodations, technological advancements for wireless networks and accessing course material online, and more sophisticated extra-curricular offerings, many of which are tangential to the

core education and research mission (Couturier, 2006). At the same time, policymakers are demanding more accountability related to faculty productivity in support of the tenure system (Shapiro, 2005), learning assessments and student outcomes (Callahan & Finney, 2002; Couturier, 2006), and more rigorous justifications for tuition increases (Couturier, 2006). In many regards, boards and legislatures hold colleges and universities accountable for their performance in much the same way as the private sector (Couturier, 2006; Tierney, 1999). These factors add to the demands placed on institutional resources, especially human capital such as faculty. Shapiro (2005) provides a positive perspective to the challenges facing higher education, noting “the distinguished university is in a constant state of evolution characterized by an ever-changing kaleidoscope of both opportunities and constraints. Change may appear to be unnecessarily risky, but...such anxieties and the honest self-examination they ought to occasion are essential ingredients in a university’s capacity to build and maintain its excellence” (p. 39).

### **Changes in the State Role**

Clark (2004) emphasizes the changing relationship between state and institution claiming that there are new forms of university, business, and state relationships. Moreover, Clark (2004) claims that as a result of the new relationships, state universities are morphing into state-assisted universities and finding ways to become privately-financed public universities. In other words, universities are becoming "self-reliant"

(Clark, 2004). According to the National Council of State Legislatures, states are facing a collective shortfall of \$91 billion for the 2012 budget year and many are led by politicians who are reluctant to raise taxes (Kiley, 2011).

Weisbrod et al. (2008) claimed that low levels of financial support from state governments have led to public colleges becoming “privatized” (p. 16). Privatizing has taken many different forms, for example, substituting federal resources, private giving, and tuition revenues for state subsidies (Shapiro, 2005). Specifically, the rising cost of student tuition at four-year publics, which has corresponded to the decline of state governmental grants since the 1990s, is evidence of the changing nature of the public university landscape (Weisbrod et al., 2008). However, because tuition hikes at most institutions do not account for lost state appropriations, lawmakers are demanding justification for increases, often pointing to inefficiencies in colleges and universities (Kiley, 2011). There is disagreement among lawmakers and institutional leaders about the root of the issue, although most agree that the politics have changed (Kiley, 2011). The most recent economic recession, which began in 2008, appeared to be like others with state revenues not meeting state funding obligations and resulting in budget shortfalls and cuts to state services; however, states are planning budget cuts for 2012 and a weak economic forecast have institutions worried about the state’s investment in higher education amidst competing demands (Kiley, 2011). For instance, when



University of Wisconsin system President Kevin P. Reilly called for a reinvestment in higher education, a spokesman for state responded by stating:

That ignores reality. No one sees the economy turning around anytime in the near future, so massive reinvestment in the university system is not going to occur. If anything is going to happen first, if the state comes up with any resources, the top goal is to deal with K-12 because that is the obligation of state government (Kiley, 2011, para. 6).

This sentiment is evident of the challenges facing higher education and the dispute regarding higher education as a public or private good. Lawmakers are also finding it easier to divest in higher education because of the perceived available revenue sources, such as contracts, donations, investment income, and grants and perception of higher education as a private good (Kiley, 2011).

The significant declines in state appropriations are directly related to institutional pursuit of revenue-generation, including activities such as increasing tuition rates or using differential tuition rates, recruiting more “full-pay” students, redirecting aid into merit-based versus need-based criteria, and aggressively pursuing external research grants, among others (Slaughter & Rhodes, 2004; Weisbrod et al., 2008). Some public institutions are searching for ways to become more privatized or self-sufficient and are hoping to avoid political legislative processes for setting tuition rates (Weisbrod et al., 2008). At the same time, institutions are offering more services

and more sophisticated facilities which require higher expenditures and thus more revenue (Couturier, 2006).

As in corporate America, where mission statements are essential to the organization, one might look to a mission statement for insight into the priorities of a college or university's activities. Thus, Morpew and Hartley (2006) analyzed 300 mission statements from different types of institutions, using multiple people to code statements and concluded that institutional control, public or private was the most important aspect in predicting mission statement elements. However, institutional mission statements were "amazingly vague" and not used in strategic planning. Weisbrod et al. (2008) concluded that while there were many "shades of gray" in the industry of higher education and all revenue sources have some adverse side effects, revenue allows institutions to fulfill their social missions. Slaughter and Rhoads (2004) point out from an academic capitalist framework that colleges and universities act as marketers and are active players in the changing landscape. This theory is further explored below. Couturier (2006) supports this notion stating that as colleges and universities began pursuing more revenue opportunities and engaging in competitive behaviors, the public investment also began to shift.

Weisbrod et al. (2008) also calls attention to the newer phenomena and reliability on fee revenue at public institutions. They claim that fees have been rising faster than tuition in percentage terms and at some institutions, fees makeup 40

percent of the total cost of tuition (Weisbrod et al., 2008). The increased use of fees is concerning because in many states approval processes required by legislative bodies help work to keep tuition affordable for families. With limited or no oversight on fees, Weisbrod et al. (2008) warn that universities have been given “free reign” to use fees as an alternative to tuition for revenue generation. Many institutions are looking at solutions to what has been termed the “new normal” in college and university funding sources with high tuition/high aid models, differential tuition or varying tuition structures, growing undergraduate full-pay students and other initiatives (Callahan & Finney, 2002; Kiley, 2011). In an increasingly competitive industry and market, colleges are fighting for advantage, perhaps even survival and the resulting effect is movement from a public to a private good (Slaughter & Rhodes, 2004; Weisbrod et al., 2008). To balance the funding equation facing colleges and universities, scholars argue that transparent discussions about revenues and expenditures with trustees, administrators, faculty members and lawmakers are required (Kiley, 2011).

Discussions regarding the concerns of college finances are not limited to issues of revenue-generation, but also include efforts for cost-cutting and efficiency (Weisbrod et al., 2008). Cost-cutting and efficiency are important values in the private sector, especially for many trustees and policymakers, but such efforts can be at odds with the missions of higher education (Tierney, 2008). In particular, the core mission of creating and disseminating knowledge is expensive and often misunderstood by external

stakeholders (Tierney, 2008). Shapiro (2005) summarizes his reflections on the current state of market pressures on higher education noting, “although under a broad variety of circumstances private markets remain an extraordinarily efficient means for mobilizing resources and services, they are not always effective in dealing with the issues of social and economic justice that are so central to higher education’s role” (p. xiv). Understanding the impact and extent of market pressures on an institution provides insight into the institutional decisions that reflect broad social goals and the necessary pursuit of revenue.

### **Public Policy and Political Ideology**

A brief examination of the history of American colleges and universities provides the foundation for the debate regarding education as a public good versus private good. The first American colleges were established not by independent groups of faculty and students or by royal initiatives like European universities, but instead by private and public communities (Shapiro, 2005). They were established to serve important historic purposes such as advancements in agriculture, which was a distinct contribution to the social structure of society (Shapiro, 2005). In the Institute for Higher Education Policy’s 1998 report, *Reaping the Benefits: Defining the Public and Private Value of Going to College*, the authors reflect on the changes in education and call attention to the benefits as a result of learning. Figure 1 provides an overview of the social good benefits that are reflected in others’ statements and in the theories guiding this study.

**Figure 1*****The Array of Benefits to Higher Education (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1998)***

	PUBLIC	PRIVATE
ECONOMIC	Increased Tax Revenues Greater Productivity Increased Consumption Increased Workforce Flexibility Decreased Reliance on Government Financial Support	Higher Salaries and Benefits Employment Higher Savings Levels Improved Working Conditions Personal/Professional Mobility
SOCIAL	Reduced Crime Rates Increased Charitable Giving/Community Service Increased Quality of Civic Life Social Cohesion/Appreciation of Diversity Improved Ability to Adapt to and Use Technology	Improved Health/Life Expectancy Improved Quality of Life for Offspring Better Consumer Decision- making Increased Personal Status More Hobbies, Leisure Activities

Jones and Wellman (2010) argue that, “All public institutions are chartered to serve public purposes, whether state funds are 10 percent or 90 percent of their revenue streams” (p. 10). Shapiro (2005) argues that all higher education institutions (public and private, non-profit and for-profit, and state, research and community colleges) serve a public purpose, play a distinctive role and are a source of strength and vitality of the American higher education system. However, Shapiro (2005) acknowledged that there are considerable variations in quality, purpose and aspirations within each sector. Some of the variations can be seen through public policy. For

example, there are differences in tax law based upon the type of entity that an individual chooses to donate to. Donations to a public or a nonprofit school are tax-deductible, but are not tax-deductible for gifts given to for-profit schools. Weisbrod et al. (2008) claims that these distinctions provide evidence that there are significant differences in the social contributions that institutions are expected to provide based upon sector and institutional type.

The social good mission includes: 1) providing students access to a college education regardless of the students' ability to pay or family circumstances; 2) research and knowledge generation, where dissemination is free for others to build upon; and 3) public services, recognizing the responsibility of educating citizens and producing research for the benefit of a larger community (especially important to state-owned universities) (Shapiro, 2005; Thomas & Perna, 2004; Weisbrod et al., 2008). The foci of these three components, and of the public good debate, is that higher education is not of private interest to an individual, but brings broad benefits to society that cannot be sold (Thomas & Perna, 2004). In a 2006 national report, Couturier referred to America's commitment to provide education to populations who could otherwise not afford it as the "secret weapon" in the struggle to improve the well-being of American society.

How the public good mission is operationalized at a research, land-grant institution is a point of contention. As Weisbrod and associates (2008) developed the

two-good framework, they found contentious questions related to the form and quality of higher education that should be made accessible to students. In addition, Gumpert and Zemsky (2003) claim that the agenda of access in American colleges and universities has made higher education a battleground in the fight to protect and extend affirmative action, but the issue is less about access and more about access to what.

The importance of the topic is illustrated by the changes in the American middle-class standard of living which now requires some level of education and training beyond high school (Callahan & Finney, 2002; Weisbrod et al., 2008). Callahan and Finney (2002) point out the penalties for both individuals and society when access to higher education becomes more restricted. They claim that when individuals no longer have the ability to gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to function effectively as citizens, family members, consumers, and workers, they forgo a middle-class standard of living (Callahan & Finney, 2002). As a result, the national economy may remain flat or could face declining long-term prosperity (Callahan & Finney, 2002). Essentially, there would be negative effects on society as a whole through the increase of social stratification (Couturier, 2006). Couturier's 2006 national report claimed that between 2000 and 2010, two million qualified high school graduates from low- and moderate-income families would be shut out of college due to financial concerns. Weisbrod et al. (2008) compares a college education to hospital care, claiming that it is "too important to be left to the competitive forces of the marketplace" (p. 1) and the social goal of higher

education for all is “very appealing, not clearly defined as to the quality of service, and controversial as to who should pay for it” (pp. 286-287). Government involvement, through activities such as state subsidies, financial aid, grants for research, educational programs and others are how the market is disrupted and institutions are positioned to meet a social good mission.

Underlying today’s public debate is the tension between striving to engage in mission-good activities and pursuing revenue to fund them, answering the question of what role higher education plays in postindustrial societies and how it should be funded (Shapiro, 2005). Weisbrod et al. (2008) recalls that two to three generations ago, higher education was for the few and career prospects did not require a bachelor’s degree, let alone from a “high quality” institution. In contrast, now access to college is approaching the status of a basic right, much like the right to a high school education years ago. Couturier (2006) reported findings from a national study conducted in 2003, noting that 76 percent of those surveyed felt that college is more important today than it was ten years ago. Also, 87 percent of respondents believed a high school graduate should continue on to college instead of starting a job, and 37 percent said that a college degree was necessary for success (Couturier, 2006).

A study conducted by William Doyle in 2007 suggests similar conclusions as Couturier and Weisbrod et al., and adds the dimension of political party affiliation. Doyle examined public opinion and higher education policy through a large (n = 1,015)



telephone survey looking for statistical differences between respondent's opinions based upon affiliated political parties regarding opportunities to attend higher education. His findings suggested that Republicans are more likely than Democrats to believe that the majority of people have the opportunity to go on to higher education and that Democrats are much more likely than Republicans to think that there are many qualified people who cannot pay for higher education (Doyle, 2007). Doyle drew conclusions from his findings that Democrats are more in line with policy disposition among congressional leaders and their constituents than Republicans. Given his findings, Doyle (2007) warned, "if higher education is not seen as a public interest, but a special interest beholden to one party or another, then it becomes difficult to make a general argument for support of higher education without tailoring that argument to the ideological and political needs of policymakers" (p. 387). However, he stated that the worst-case scenario in public policy is for a topic to be left off of an agenda, "having partisan disagreement on an issue means that enough concern exists for persons to be worried about the topic...as this research shows, higher education is both a highly salient and politically charged issue for many voters—something that their elected representatives have not ignored" (Doyle, 2007, p. 387).

### **Access**

To understand the complexity of the challenges of access to higher education and demonstrate the value of exploring faculty understanding of the issue, it is essential

to review the history of access, addressing access from three veins of research including financial aid, college choice, and academic preparation, and the available research on access involving tenured and tenure-track faculty. In this section the picture of the access issue is developed and in most cases, the perspective of faculty is missing. This activity serves varied purposes. It shows how researchers have approached the access problem, illuminates the gap in the literature addressed by this study, and contextualizes the importance of this study's participants in more fully understanding the issues. The literature positions the faculty perspective within the larger landscape and illustrates how their understanding could provide additional insight into addressing the problem.

### **History of the Access Challenge**

Although American higher education began as only accessible to the elite and was used to determine the scholarly elite, now a college education is viewed as distributing and allocating the "rungs on the occupational ladder" as well as determining the social structure and social mobility of Americans (Brubacher, 1982, p. 62). American public higher education has been built around and touted as a "central vehicle for creating equity in society," yet access to higher education has been and remains a critical issue (Tierney, 1999, p. 15). Open access to higher education is centered on the sociological ideal that education is a public good that benefits all of society. This notion implies that higher education values knowledge and scientific discovery as public goods

to which the “citizenry has claims” for the public benefit and that an educated citizenry leads to benefits for all of society (Slaughter & Rhoads, 2004, p. 28). Economic rationales also support open access missions because an educated workforce contributes to the productivity, development and economic well-being of a nation (St. John, 2003).

These convictions have been exemplified by public policymakers who have long supported education as a means for economic development and as a necessity for a strong democracy (Hossler, Schmit & Vesper, 1998; St. John, 2003). The Morrill Act of 1862, which created the nation’s land-grant institutions and the Pell Grant program, created through the Higher Education Act of 1965, are examples of this widespread ideal (St. John & Musoba, 2011). The Morrill Act of 1862 created the nation’s land-grant institutions founded on principles of access and the Act charged these institutions with providing their state’s population with “a practical education that had direct relevance to their daily lives” (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, n.d.). The Basic Opportunity Grant Program, known today as the Pell Grant program, was created in 1972 and significantly expanded access to education by providing students with grant aid that could be used at the college or university of their choice. Whereas higher education in America began as accessible only to the elite, these two federal initiatives significantly expanded access to higher education and changed American history forever (St. John, 2003). St. John and Musoba (2011) encapsulated this notion, “The movement toward mass higher education, from the expansion after World War II to the

accommodations of the baby boom generation lasting through 1980, contributed to the development of a dynamic, diversified, and decentralized national system of higher education” (p. 2). American higher education enjoyed years as the model of a higher education system and as a destination for the world’s population (St. John, 2003).

However, as many scholars have noted, the global economy and environment of American higher education has changed bringing about implications to access (Chen & DesJardins, 2010; Paulsen & St. John, 2002; Tierney, 1999; Zemsky, 1998). The twenty-first century brought a combination of challenges and the uncertainty of available resources, presenting unprecedented market conditions that have demanded significant changes in how colleges and universities operate (Jones & Wellman, 2010). In addition, a complicated and conservative public policy ideology focused on outcomes, accountability and efficiency, and shifting financial assistance to middle-income students or based on merit-aid has affected the ability to provide access to lower income students (St. John, 2003). Today the academy has been called upon for renewing their commitment to access and equity as a core goal (Tierney, 1999), in particular, land-grant institutions, which awarded two-thirds of the nation’s bachelor’s degrees during the 1990s, have been called upon to “return to their roots” and to make access to a central priority in their strategic plans (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 1998, p. 9). And yet, a maximum Pell grant covers only a small

fraction of tuition (Heller, 2010) and the access gap between socioeconomic and racial groups persists (St. John, 2003; St. John et al., 2011).

Access is typically studied in three ways or with regard to three aspects of the access puzzle: 1) financially, including need-based and merit-based financial aid; 2) college or rational choice models; and 3) consideration of academic preparation issues. More recently, studies have attempted to examine more than one aspect which usually alludes to issues of cultural capital, or a student and his family's knowledge of postsecondary education readiness and processes (e.g. St. John, 2003 and St. John et al., 2011). The higher education literature includes numerous studies about varying aspects of student access such as assessments of financial aid programs and policy, models of college selection and persistence, outcomes of preparatory programs and curriculum, including analyses of student demographics (Chen & DesJardins, 2010; Freeman & Thomas, 2002; McDonough, 1997; Paulsen & St. John, 2002; Perez & McDonough, 2008; Perna, 2008; Perna & Titus, 2004). These studies focus on one program or one group of students, perhaps within an institution, but rarely incorporate faculty perspectives.

### **Financial Access**

The financial access literature is vast and diverse. Financial aid is an arena where issues related to the economics, market demands, values and assumptions, inequality and social justice emerge. Many of these issues are further examined and followed up upon later in this chapter. Foci of financial access studies include the effects of financial

aid on enrollment and persistence (Heller, 1997); politics and historical perspectives of public policy programs such as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 or the GI Bill, Middle Income Student Assistance Act of 1980, and the Pell Grant program (St. John, 2003); cause and effect of rising tuition (McPherson & Schapiro, 1991) and student debt (Perna, 2008); changes in merit-aid and need-based aid programs (Doyle, Delaney & Naughton, 2007; Heller, 1997; Heller & Marin, 2004); and the complexity of financial aid forms and information for students and their families' knowledge and preparation for completing the necessary forms (St. John et al., 2011; Tierney & Venegas, 2009). Although many of these topics seem unrelated to faculty, the effects of these issues directly influence faculty jobs, which students are in the classrooms that faculty work with and who is available to assist with their research, and ultimately the future of the state and nation in which they live.

The literature has confirmed that as tuition goes up, enrollment goes down (Heller, 1997; Gladieux, 2004; Leslie & Brinkman, 1987; McPherson & Schapiro, 1991) and that state and national financial aid programs and policies have expanded access to higher education (Doyle et al., 2009; Heller, 2002; Hossler et al., 1998; Ness, 2010; Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, Thomas & Li, 2008; St. John, 2003; Tierney, 1999). It is also well known that a maximum Pell grant covers only a fraction of tuition, meaning some families are no longer able to afford the cost of higher education (Heller, 2010). Heller (1997) stated, "The evidence is clear that both tuition prices and financial aid awards

affect access to public higher education” (p. 638). Those most affected tend to be students from low-income and ethnic and racially underrepresented backgrounds (Couturier, 2006). St. John (2003) noted that there was virtually equality in college participation for African Americans and Hispanics compared to Whites in 1975, but that the opportunity gap emerged in the last quarter of the twentieth century and continues to widen. Between 1980-82 and 1992 enrollment rates increased from 57 to 60 percent for low-income students and 68 to 90 percent for high-income students (Kane, 1999). By 2005, the gains for underrepresented and low-income African-Americans were 13 percent and 8 percent for Hispanics, compared to the overall college participation rate of 73 percent (Toutkoushian & Shafiq, 2010). The disparity between income and racial groups has become more disconcerting when examining what types of institutions students are attending. African-American and Hispanic students are grossly overrepresented at two-year institutions compared to four-year institutions which mirrors the disproportions of low-income versus high-income students at these institutions as well (Steinberg, Piraino & Haveman, 2009).

Many scholars agree that a shift away from need-based aid has occurred at all levels; often the shift has been from need-based aid to self-pay programs (i.e. student loans) and merit-based aid (Couturier, 2006; Heller, 2002; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Thomas & Perna, 2004; Weisbrod et al., 2008). Because academically based aid disproportionately flows to White and more affluent students, this represents a financial

aid system that does not support students and families with the most financial need (Couturier, 2006). In addition, Hearn (2001) posited that federal student aid policies lack philosophical coherence, systematic patterns of policy development and programmatic clarity and distinctiveness, which Perna et al. (2008) concluded extends similarly to state and institutional policies.

The principle federal mechanism for intervening in college enrollment decisions for traditionally-aged students has been through grants and loans (Hossler et al., 1998), but there has been a fundamental change in the ways the government finances higher education (Paulsen & St. John, 2002). The federal government has shifted from using grants as the primary means of promoting postsecondary opportunity to using loans for this purpose (Paulsen & St. John, 2002). In the late 1970s the maximum Pell Grant covered 84 percent of the average cost to attend a public institution; however, in 2000 the maximum Pell Grant covered only 42 percent of the same cost (Thomas & Perna, 2004). On the other hand, federally supported loans increased from \$19.1 billion in 1991-1992 to \$42.4 billion in 2001-2002 (Thomas & Perna, 2004).

It has been well-documented that a willingness to borrow is positively related to college enrollment, especially at a four-year institution (Perna, 2008; St. John, 2012, personal communication). Nearly half of dependent undergraduates with family incomes below \$100,000 borrowed in 2003-2004, yet students with family incomes over \$80,000 borrowed more than those with incomes less than \$20,000 (Perna, 2008).



Perna (2008) explored the disparity through a qualitative case study of two groups of high school students. Through her study, she concluded that low-income students were more reluctant to borrow than high-income students; moreover, staff at low-resource schools provided mixed messages about borrowing and students loans (Perna, 2008). Because low-income and students from minority backgrounds, especially Hispanic and African American students tend to be more reluctant to borrow, their attendance in four-year institutions has decreased (Paulsen & St. John, 2002). The increased use of loans has also strengthened the market environment of higher education and positioned students as consumers (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Although these outcomes have not been studied in relation to faculty perspectives and experiences, the link could easily be made. It is also noteworthy that student loans were profitable for colleges who received certain kickbacks until this became illegal in 2007 (Weisbrod et al., 2008).

At the state level, states have had three approaches to supporting college participation: 1) low-cost tuition through state appropriations; 2) state financial aid and loan programs; and more recently 3) legislations to encourage savings and prepaid tuition plans (Hossler et al., 1998). Toutkoushian and Shafiq (2010) consider the two state approaches of supporting college participation through appropriations, which reduces the sticker price for all students, and need-based and merit-based programs, which targets certain populations of students. State appropriations provide financial

support to all in-state students who attend in-state public institutions whereas state financial aid programs benefits those students who meet eligibility criteria, merit- or need-based or a combination of both (Toutkoushian & Shafiq, 2010). Through an analysis of applying five simulations of state aid applications, Toutkoushian and Shafiq concluded that a state need-based program led to the most significant gains in college participation rates. Moreover, the evidence suggests that more colleges are using state appropriations for merit-based aid programs versus reducing the cost of all students or supporting need-based programs (Toutkoushian & Shafiq, 2010). While Toutkoushian and Shafiq (2010) conclude that a state need-based financial aid model would provide the most benefit for states interested in raising the educational attainment levels of their citizens, they acknowledge the extreme unlikeliness of a state's ability to pass such public policy, "There are more voters who would stand to lose if appropriations were eliminated than there are voters who would stand to gain if need-based financial aid were increased" (p. 58).

Heller (2002) analyzed state financial aid programs such as Georgia's Hope merit program, which started the trend of state merit-based programs in 1993. Heller claims that many merit-based programs systematically excluded poor students from receiving merit-based funds. For example, Heller points out that when the Hope scholarship program began, students were required to use their Pell Grants prior to the Hope scholarship. Since the Hope scholarship could only be used for tuition and fees and the

Pell Grant could be used for any educational cost, students were prohibited from receiving Hope funds (Heller, 2002). Although the Hope program features have been altered, Heller continues to argue that while the Georgia Hope merit-based program was successful in keeping Georgia residents at in-state colleges, it could also be blamed for widening the income and racial gap of those who are attending Georgia's colleges and universities (Heller, 2002). Longanecker (2002) responded to Heller's analysis and argued that merit-based aid programs weren't the "culprit" for the income and racial gap, but claimed that there was a lack of general support and concern for poor people. Ness (2010) also analyzed the trends of merit-based versus need-based programs and found that in 14 states, non-need based aid increased from \$349 million to \$2.2 billion while need-based increased from \$700 million to \$800 million over the same period of time. In a qualitative comparative case study design, Ness (2010) analyzed the policy making process and concluded that policy entrepreneurs and policy windows had to be aligned to successfully implement a merit-based program.

Hossler et al. (1998) emphasizes, "federal and state aid is intended to promote access to college, it is not intended to promote the decision to attend one school over another" unlike institutional aid strategies (p. 93). At an institutional level, Weisbrod and associates (2008) claims the rise of merit financial aid suggests institutions are competing for good students, regardless of need. From their analysis of national data

sets and institutional case studies, Weisbrod et al. (2008) summarized their findings of institutional financial aid:

The private financial return from higher education underlies the importance of tuition as a revenue source, posing little to no problem for some families. But for less affluent students and families, financial barriers can be high and obstacles to borrowing can be daunting. As a result, a school faces a conflict between making greater use of tuition to raise revenue and attracting able but lower income students by cutting tuition. This translates into a school's financial aid policy (p. 36).

Weisbrod and associates (2008) argue that institutional tuition and financial aid policies are structured to attract certain types of students and that it is quite common for different students to be charged different prices. Through their study they found that since 2003, public institutions have focused more on attracting high-ability students versus low-income students, resulting in more merit-based aid and less tuition discounting based on ability to pay. Couturier's analysis and 2006 report for the Institute of Higher Education Policy supports this claim (Couturier, 2006). The report states that tuition discounting through academically-based aid is being used by institutions to compete for students with characteristics such as high standardized test scores which improve an institution's prestige. Simply stated, "This strategy is often detrimental to underserved students" (Couturier, 2006, p. iv).

Ehrenberg, Zhang and Levin (2006) documented the negative relationship between college and university access to National Merit Scholarships and the share of students from low-income families. Through their analysis they found that for every ten institutionally funded National Merit Scholarship enrollees, there was an associated drop of four Pell Grant recipients (Ehrenberg et al., 2006). Through a similar quantitative analysis using institutional data, Steinberg, Piraino and Haveman (2009) found a negative relationship between the median SAT score of incoming freshmen and the prevalence of Pell Grant recipients and a negative relationship between the size of the undergraduate population at public institutions and the share of Pell Grant recipients. There was a large negative relationship between median SAT score and prevalence of Pell Grant recipients and a smaller, but significant relationship between size of undergraduate body and share of Pell Grant recipients (Steinberg et al., 2009). Steinberg et al. (2009) found that for every increase of one percent in the total undergraduate enrollment (adjusted for non-degree and international students) a 0.05 percent decrease in Pell Grant recipients. A reanalysis including international students would likely result in a larger statistically significant difference. Their conclusions echo concerns about institutional selectivity and admissions policies, but also call attention to growth initiatives and recruitment practices. Each of these issues impact and potentially could be influenced by faculty members.

A concern exists that if institutional leaders take an academic capitalist view when awarding institutional aid, it is expected that they will award more merit-based aid and be less likely to have funds available to subsidize the cost of attendance for lower income students as most merit-based awards are awarded to higher income students (Griffith, 2009; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Merit-based awards are used to attract the “best and brightest” students which may stimulate national attention and rankings, improve graduation rates, and attract research grants for institutions but often do not advance the “democratic mission” of an institution (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004, p. 57). The competition to succeed in institutional rankings reflects the tastes of faculty as well as other institutional stakeholders (Steinberg et al., 2009). Doyle, Delaney and Naughton (2009) used hierarchical linear modeling to analyze state and institutional financial aid policies at four-year public institutions based on data collected in the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey. They found that in most cases, institutions were reinforcing state policy through their own strategies versus compensating for state policy (Doyle et al., 2009). In other words, in the Southern region of the United States where states dedicate the most funds to merit-based programs, Southern four-year public institutions also dedicate most aid to merit-based programs (Doyle et al., 2009). Doyle et al. (2009) emphasizes that the key for awarding financial aid is balance between the two completing goals of meeting unmet student need and fostering institutional excellence.

There are few studies that empirically consider the tastes of faculty and institutional stakeholders in institutional aid policy or strategies to achieve goals related to access. More research is needed on institutional aid strategies incorporating a faculty perspective which could be powerful information for decisions makers. St. John (2012, personal communication) noted the effects of campus initiatives such as the Carolina First program which began at the University of North Carolina and incorporates efforts of faculty in increasing access for first-generation students ([firstgenerationunc.edu](http://firstgenerationunc.edu), 2012). St. John emphasized that institutional context is vital for policies and access initiatives to succeed and that financial access is only one part of the equation (St. John, 2012, personal communication).

Issues related to financial aid illustrate the complexity of the access puzzle and the gravity of the difficulties facing students and their families, alluding to the challenges facing institutions, states and the nation. These issues ultimately impact faculty and can be influenced by faculty who have been overlooked in the research. In addition, the policies associated with financial aid are critical examples that reflect the ideology, assumptions and values related to access. Exploring faculty perspectives and understanding of financial access fills a gap in the literature and could create strategic opportunities for future programming and empirical research. It is important to understand the faculty perspective of access, as faculty members serve as advocates for higher education and typically play active roles in their communities. Many also conduct

the research which leads to state policy development and also are charged with conducting the analysis (Ness, 2010; St. John, 2012, personal communication).

### **Access as College Choice**

College choice research considers social, psychological, economic and sociological status or attainment in research and models (McDonough, 1997). Although there are three strands of research in the access literature, many overlap and more scholars are recognizing the necessity to examine the connections between aspects of the access challenge (St. John et al., 2011; Thomas & Perna, 2004; Tierney & Venegas, 2009). Providing students with a choice of where to attend college was an important philosophical shift with the Higher Education Act of 1965. With the Pell Grant program, students were given aid that could be applied to educational costs at an accredited institution of their choice (Thomas & Perna, 2004). Students were empowered to make educational choices and the federal government hoped to expand access and social opportunity through the program (St. John, 2003). The federal government invested substantially (\$54.3 billion in 2001-2002) with the primary goal of ensuring that students were not denied access or choice (Thomas & Perna, 2004). From a review of fifty years of research, Thomas and Perna (2004) claim that access and college choice remain stratified by socioeconomic status and race and ethnicity, despite the many policies and programs in place. Low-income students and minority students are not less likely to enroll at four-year institutions, but are less likely to attend (Thomas & Perna, 2004).



Through their review, they also concluded that the persistent gaps in college access and choice by family income indicated the public sector approach to ensuring educational opportunity is insufficient and structural inequalities in American society should be reconsidered by examining the combination of issues (Thomas & Perna, 2004).

Perna and Titus (2004) also found that state public policies influenced the type of college or university that high school graduates attend, after taking into account student-level predictors of enrollment. Their empirical study used odds-ratios and multilevel modeling of data from the NELS: 93/94, IPEDS, State Comparisons of Educational Statistics, National Association of State Scholarships and Grant Programs, and the Current Population Survey to examine four kinds of state policy that may influence college choice: 1) direct appropriations to higher education institutions; 2) financial aid awarded directly to students; 3) tuition rates; and 4) policies related to academic preparation at elementary and secondary schools (Perna & Titus, 2004). Perna and Titus (2004) concluded that all four policies are related to enrollment patterns, but did not statistically explain the socioeconomic status differences in college enrollment. One of their proxies for academic preparation, K-12 student and faculty ratio, did explain enrollment patterns as stratified by SES (Perna & Titus, 2004). Still, they found that the lowest SES students were more likely to enroll at in-state private four-year than at four-year public institutions after controlling for other state and student variables, which suggests that private institutions were more effective at targeting need-based aid

resources to low SES, in-state students (Perna & Titus, 2004). In addition, they found that increases in tuition and decreases in state aid had the greatest effect on enrollment at community colleges and low-income students were most sensitive to the changes in tuition (Perna & Titus, 2004).

McDonough emphasized that social class, race, and gender directly impacted individual choice and indirectly scholastic aptitude (McDonough, 1997). Hurtado, Inkelas, Briggs, and Rhee (1997) found that Latinos were the least likely racial group to participate in an extensive college choice process, even for high-achieving Latinos. This notion was supported by a 2006 study that found eight-grade math scores positively affected White and African American students' probability of attending a four-year institution, but had no effect on the likelihood that Latino students would begin postsecondary education at a community college (Kurlaender, 2006). Perez and McDonough (2008) conducted focus groups with over 100 high school juniors and seniors and used chain migration theory to understand the college choice process for first-generation students. This study highlighted the importance of relationships and networks in the college choice process, especially for first-generation students (Perez & McDonough, 2008).

The research regarding college choice begins to delve into the difficult conversations of ensuring access to certain types of institutions. Weisbrod et al. (2008) argues that by observing admissions and enrollment decisions of students, society

reveals who it believes should have access to education and receive the most advanced education. This notion reveals a social dilemma in which research will need to be used to build partnerships and propose creative solutions (St. John, 2012, personal communication). St. John argues that the four-year institution has become a privileged environment relegating low-income, first-generation and minority student participation in postsecondary education to two-year institutions. Understanding the tenure and tenured-track faculty perspective of access may provide new insight into approaching the issues of college choice.

### **Academic Preparation and Access**

In the public policy arena, concerns about academic preparation and its role in access emerged in the 1980s during a time when funding for the Pell Grant program became uncertain (St. John, 2003; St. John et al., 2011). Several federally funded studies (e.g. NCES, 1996) concluded that disparities in academic preparation, especially not enrolling in high school math courses was the primary cause of the access gap between minorities and White students (St. John, 2003). States rapidly adopted new policies based on this argument and by 2000 all states had adopted new math standards (St. John et al., 2011). However, requiring more math classes did not increase college enrollment (St. John, 2006). Even though the pool of qualified students expanded, college enrollments actually declined, especially in four-year institutions (St. John et al., 2011). Through a reanalysis of data used in studies like the 1996 NCES study and

reconceptualization of possible factors, St. John was able to prove that academic preparation was not the sole factor that determined access; thus, he argued that academic preparation could not be explored in isolation of issues of financial access (St. John, 2003). In his 2003 study, St. John also illustrated how financial concerns could contribute to academic preparation indirectly and thus, explain disparities between the college attendance rates (St. John, 2003). Since then others have conducted empirical analyses and posited similar arguments that academic preparation cannot be analyzed in isolation of financial access and college choice (Perna & Titus, 2004; Perna et al., 2008; St. John et al., 2011; Tierney & Venegas, 2009). Tierney and Venegas acknowledge the “heated” debate between researchers who claim academic preparation explains inequalities and is equivalent to—or even supersedes the importance of financial aid, and they call for continued study of the topic using a range of methodologies (Tierney & Venegas, 2009).

Research suggests that low-income students do not prepare for college because they believe postsecondary education is expensive and unaffordable (St. John, 2003), yet “virtually all research has neglected to speak with, interview, reflect on or otherwise address assumptions, beliefs and concerns of low-income students” (Tierney & Venegas, 2009, p. 368). Tierney and Venegas (2009) conducted a qualitative analysis to examine issues across both academic preparation and access to financial aid information for low-income students, as opposed to applying a rational choice framework which has been

used in many academic preparation studies. Rational choice frameworks, like the popular academic pipeline proposed by NCES, view access from a linear perspective and overlook access to accurate financial aid information and the effects of financial barriers on academic preparation, such as taking standardized tests or submitting admissions applications (St. John, 2003; Tierney & Venegas, 2009). Tierney and Venegas (2009) found that academic preparation for college and access to financial aid information was a multifaceted and longitudinal issue. They further posit that academic preparation is not equivalent or more important than students' ability to access accurate information about costs of postsecondary education and financial aid (Tierney & Venegas, 2009).

In its report, *Access Denied*, the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance stated, "The rate at which academically qualified low-income students attend four-year institutions provides one of the most sobering views of America's educational and economic future" (2001, p. vi). St. John and Musoba (2011) along with other scholars agree that the United States is in the midst of a massive systemic transformation of K-12 education, in particular with renewed focus on the college preparatory curriculum in high schools. The new goals are for all students to be prepared for college during high school and for a majority of students to attain two-year or four-year degrees (Couturier, 2006; Perna & Titus, 2004; St. John & Musoba, 2011). Couturier (2006), however, predicts that a convergence of trends such as increases in tuition rates, limitations of the Pell Grant program, high debt levels of students, and

threats to outreach programs for low-income, first-generation and underrepresented students will substantially impact access and persistence of students. Countering the convergence will require more than funds. Partnerships between governments, institutions, students and parents in combination with research and a better understanding of the challenges and pressures are necessary (Couturier, 2006).

Weisbrod and associates state that by observing the educational and scholarly commitments of institutions and their faculties, important aspects of society are uncovered such as the importance of traditional values, weight attached to innovation, most vital sources of knowledge and wisdom, value placed on cognitive abilities, the most highly prized virtues, nature of broad hopes and aspirations of society itself (Weisbrod et al., 2008). Faculty members determine what skills, knowledge, and experiences are valued in academia (Weidman, 1989). They determine academic standards. All of these considerations impact students. Yet, little is known about the faculty's perception of access and this perspective is important because the faculty represents the heart of an institution.

St. John (2012) alludes to the importance of "field" in his restatement of academic capital formation. This study further develops Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "field" within the framework of academic capital formation to learn more about the faculty perspective of access. Approaching access from the faculty perspective also allows for consideration of faculty-student interactions and the faculty role as key

stakeholders in their institutions, within their states, and ultimately in society.

Understanding their perspectives of access will enable a more comprehensive analysis and strategic approach for policymakers and advocates.

### **Faculty Perspectives and Culture**

Some scholars suggest that faculty have become more committed to their respective disciplines versus the institution (Clark, 2004; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), although empirical evidence to support this claim could not be found. Most of the research regarding faculty perspectives has been focused on faculty life, socialization, tenure and promotion, productivity, and evaluation. Drawing from sociological theory, research has contributed to the understanding of reproducing privilege among faculty (Gappa, Austin & Trice, 2007; Wolfinger, Mason & Goulden, 2004). Issues of privilege were especially evident in studies related to women and faculty of color (Gappa, Austin & Trice, 2007; Wolfinger, Mason & Goulden, 2004). There is also a line of research regarding faculty-student interaction and faculty mentoring and undergraduate research (Jarvis, Shaughnessy, Chase & Barney, 2011; Kuh, 2001; Nagda, Gregerman, Jonides, von Hippel & Lerner, 1998). Yet, we do not know much about faculty perspectives on access or understand the faculty's implied role. Understanding faculty beliefs regarding access and how these might translate for the future of higher education is important for faculty, administrators, public policy makers, and most of all for students.

An organization's culture surrounds faculty beliefs and influences faculty perspectives. Disciplinary norms and culture is an important consideration in to understanding faculty views and behaviors. Briefly, *culture* is a system of beliefs, values, understanding, and knowledge of meanings shared by organizational members (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Culture pertains to the core values that are explicit and supported by the broad population and is a way to define who a group is and who they want to be (Tierney, 1999). *Climate* is the resultant attitudes and behaviors of individuals in an organization (McDonough, 1997). Research is needed regarding faculty perspectives of access and the implications for their institutional commitment and culture. As Clark (2004) noted, "complex universities operating in complex environments require complex differentiated solutions. One hundred universities require one hundred solutions" (p. 177). In this study, issues of access are examined by learning from tenured and tenure-track faculty, those who are considered stakeholders and leaders and who have the opportunity to influence the policy, political sentiment and current and future landscapes of higher education.

The review of the access literature, description of the current context, and brief overview of research on faculty and university culture provide the context in which this study explores issue of access. The range of approaches to explore and understand access and the dilemmas facing students and higher education is vast. To further ground



the current study and provide direction in the analyses, three theoretical frameworks are presented.

### **Theoretical Framework One: Academic Capitalism**

The theory of academic capitalism is based on tenants found in economics, especially resource dependency theory and organizational change, such as process theory of professionalization and helps to explain the behavior of institutions (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The term *academic capitalism* was first used in this context by Edward J. Hackett in 1990 to summarize important structural changes in academic science, but Hackett notes that Max Weber used the term to describe medicine and natural science as state capitalist enterprises sixty-five years earlier (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). Although the designation was not originated by Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) or Slaughter and Leslie (1997), these scholars advanced *academic capitalism* as a theoretical framework.

The theory of academic capitalism strived to explain “the process of college and university integration into the new economy” and moved beyond thinking of “the student as consumer to considering the institution as marketer” (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004, p.1). Slaughter and Rhoades defined the new economy as one in which knowledge was a raw material that could be claimed through legal devices, owned, and marketed as products or services. New investment, marketing and consumption behaviors of faculty, administrators and students constituted the mechanisms of how higher

education moved into the new economy (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Public policy also played a key role in how colleges and universities were incentivized to prioritize resources. These topics were investigated using secondary data sources such as legislation, voting patterns, state system policies, court cases, and institutional documents and primary data sources including interviews with faculty and national data sets (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Qualitative analyses techniques were primarily used along with mini case studies (e.g. Internet2) and a network analysis of selected trustees and corporate board memberships (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), but beyond these two examples, methodology was not thoroughly discussed in their development of the theory. A historical look at the development of academic capitalism from a concept focused on explaining the behavior of individual academicians in Slaughter and Leslie's 1997 publication, to a theory more broadly focused on institutions of higher education in Slaughter and Rhoades' 2004 edition provides insight into the development of the framework and a better understanding of the issues.

Slaughter and Leslie's 1997 book, *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University* provided the background for their selection of the concept *academic capitalism* where they noted that their "play on words" or a paradoxical phrase was purposeful. Slaughter and Leslie's use of *academic capitalism* was intended to define the contradictory reality of the public research university environment in which faculty and staff expend their human capital in increasingly competitive situations

(Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). The alternative terms they considered were *academic entrepreneurship* and *entrepreneurial activity* but Slaughter and Leslie did not feel these terms fully captured the “encroachment of the profit motive into the academy” (p. 9). Instead, *capitalism*, defined as an economic system in which allocation decisions are driven by market forces, was combined with *academic*, which was intended to cover all college and university employees, faculty, professionals and administrators (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). *Academic capitalism* in a narrow sense was used to capture the phenomenon of academics acting as capitalists from within public institutions. Slaughter and Leslie also referred to these academicians as “state-subsidized entrepreneurs” (p. 9).

The foundational research by Slaughter and Leslie examined the ongoing and unprecedented changes of the role and work of academicians through an analysis of the global marketplace. Their research was narrowly focused on research and development policies and related activity (e.g. competition for external funding, technology transfer, etc.), but they broadly analyzed data from four countries—Australia, Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). Data sources consisted of large data sets, national policy documents, white papers, legislation, some institutional statistics, and interviews with administrators and faculty. The intent and practical application of their research was to help faculty and other academic personnel to “make sense” of their daily lives and to assist administrators with innovative solutions to

distribute institutional resources to meet the needs of the changing environment (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). The authors' conclusions were mostly focused on faculty and academic managers, but students were referenced as well.

Students' needs were discussed in context of the implications of national policies intended to meet business and industry needs, such as those calling for programs to train students directly for the workforce; during analysis of the impact on the quality of undergraduate education due to faculty and financial resources being redirected from instruction to research and development (R&D) activities; and in relation to revenue generation through increases in tuition and the resulting "student power" or students' influence on institutional decision making (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). And while these implications were secondary to those for faculty and academic personnel, at the conclusion of their introduction, Slaughter and Leslie state that their motivation for writing their book was to bring to light the "unavoidable outcome" of the decline in undergraduate education in public research universities as a result of reductions in state support. This concern was better and more succinctly explored in the 2004 version and continued development of academic capitalism, which provides more of the background for the study at hand. In their 1997 publication, the authors also did not intend to develop a theory of academic capitalism. Instead they provided a concept to explain a phenomenon, or to define the contradictory environments of research universities and presented solid examples to illustrate the complexity. The intent changed in the 2004

publication where the authors focused on constructing a theory of academic capitalism to further extend the original concept and provide a theoretical basis that could be applied in future work. Their treatment of academic capitalism in the 2004 publication is the focus for the study at hand, but the 1997 publication is noteworthy because the contextual background and concept development is more thoroughly explained in this edition.

In *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy*, Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) move from focusing on individual academicians and instead use the academy as the subject of their study. They included only non-profit, public and private institutions in their analysis. They also attempted to expand their study beyond R&D activities to include a broader set of market-related issues facing higher education such as the commercialization of instruction and educational materials, student consumption and learning, the pursuit to generate external revenue, and the organizational networks between institution, corporation and state agencies (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). However, much of the analysis remained connected to R&D activities. Slaughter and Rhoades limited their examination to institutions of higher education in the United States only.

A differing conceptual focus between the two publications also took place in part due to the difference in authors and in part from the profound changes in higher education during the 1990s (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004). The authors claimed that

when states fiscally recovered and institutional budgets rebounded, universities continued to pursue market-like activities which constituted the major change in higher education during the 1990s. Instead of relying on resource dependency theory as Slaughter and Leslie (1997) did, Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) extended the use of organizational and network theory to connect the academy to the economy, drawing from the works of sociologists Manuel Castells, Michael Foucault, and Michael Mann which connected knowledge, organizations, networks, and power to the economy thereby remodeling the theory of academic capitalism. The authors viewed institutions as playing an active role in initiating academic capitalism, not just passively being “corporatized.” Resource dependency theory and the organization models for analyzing higher education are also grounded in a presumption that there is a clear boundary between the organization and its environment or that higher education is distinct from “the state” and “the market.” Slaughter and Rhoades maintained this assumption but sought to explain why academics were working to situate themselves farther from “the state” and closer to “the marketplace.” Finally, Slaughter and Rhoades worked from an underlying premise that colleges and universities were difficult to change and relied on work by Tierney (1998, 1999) for organizational context on university issues.

Evidence of academic capitalism includes five recent trends: 1) an increase in the number of patents issued, which rose from 250 prior to 1981 to 5,545 in 1999; 2) the expansion of managerial capacity and perceived “power” of central administrators; 3)

the “unbundling” of faculty responsibilities such as undergraduate advising shifting to professional advisors; 4) the focus on developing a flexible workforce and majors linked to the “new economy”; and 5) the shift of student loan aid accounting for 17 percent of all aid in 1975-1976 to 58 percent in 2000-2001 (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004).

Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) asserted that these changes and others that had taken place in higher education were evident of the shift from a public good knowledge/learning regime to an academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime. The phenomenon of institutions pursuing market-like activities when institutional budgets had increased in the 1990s further legitimized the academic capitalist regime (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). They exposed instances in which the academy played a leading role in the changing regime and claimed to have demonstrated that market behaviors have permeated “almost *all* aspects of institutions” (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004, p. 303). Instead of examining the causality of the behaviors and mechanism moving higher education into the new economy, Slaughter and Rhoades focused on explaining the change from one regime to the other, citing evidence to support these claims.

The authors acknowledged that the two regimes, public good and academic capitalism, “coexist, intersect and overlap” yet provided little discussion or explanation of this viewpoint (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004, pp. 29-30). This omission is a weakness of this work and is a factor in the difficulty in applying the theory of academic capitalism to empirical work. In addition, Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) concluded that the change to

an academic capitalist regime presented several consequences for society in terms of access, knowledge production, and higher education's balance between roles and functions in a social, cultural, economic, political and educational sense (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Many of the consequences of academic capitalism were well explained for R&D issues and implications for students and faculty were referenced, but the discussion was intended to defend academic capitalism as a concept and the reality facing colleges and universities. The theory was incomplete because alternatives were not explored, such as the balancing act between roles previously mentioned. Finally, the authors argue that academic capitalism "does not have to take laissez-faire form" but could instead seek to enhance the "social benefits of intellectual property and educational services" (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004, p. 336). This statement is contradictory to the concept and definition of theory widely applied in social science research<sup>5</sup> and again positions academic capitalism as a concept with flexible interpretations instead of a well-established theory.

Academic capitalism is one lens in which to consider the changing nature of college and university environments and provides a useful starting point for examining institutions and institutional will. The theory not only views the students and parents as consumers, but offers the dimension of imagining the institution as a "marketer" (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). In other words, a significant contribution of academic capitalism is the perspective of institution as an active player in the current state of



affairs and resulting situation facing of higher education. Both the 1997 and 2004 publications differed from other research in that they attempted to bring together several topics that were usually treated separately in the literature. As a result, academic capitalism not only captures the many ways and means through which market and market-like behaviors have become commonplace in higher education, but also provides a tool for examining the market ethos and ideology within today's institutions (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Yet academic capitalism falls short in fully examining the complexity of the institutional landscape and presenting alternative rationales for the decisions made by institutions. The applicability of academic capitalism as a theory is difficult because of the issues referenced earlier. However, as a concept, it has guided other studies and is an impetus for the two-good framework developed by Weisbrod et al. (2008). The two-good framework improves upon the theory of academic capitalism and provides a more complete explanation of the balancing act between the two regimes.

### **Theoretical Framework Two: The Two-Good Framework**

The two-good framework was developed by Weisbrod, Ballou and Asch (2008) and began from the notion that institutions must somehow manage to balance their mission goals and revenue-generating activities. The foundational concept of the two-good framework, cross-subsidization, was originated by James (1983) in her work to understand certain practices and well-known behavioral characteristics of nonprofit

organizations. Cross-subsidization was defined as taking revenue from profitable activities and repurposing the profit to fund loss-making activities (James, 1983). Using tuition revenue from undergraduate education to fund graduate education and research, activities that are more expensive to carry out, is an example of cross-subsidization (James, 1983). James (1983) focused on the complicated decisions managers of nonprofits must make and concluded that cross-subsidization is a “deliberate long-term strategy” used in order to finance the non-revenue producing activities that the nonprofit cares about the most (p. 353). Weisbrod first expanded James’ findings into a framework he applied to nonprofit hospitals in a working paper and then furthered the research with colleagues when applying it to higher education. The results were a more formalized framework from James’ original work in understanding organizational behavior in higher education, highlighting the forces, choices and dilemmas institutions face (Weisbrod et al., 2008).

The focus of Weisbrod et al.’s (2008) research differed from that of Slaughter and Rhoades in that instead of looking to explain what was happening at institutions and in higher education, they wanted to explain why colleges and universities pursued both “lofty social missions and crass money-making activities” (p. 2). Their intention to analyze the “why” of what was happening in higher education positioned the two-good framework as a stronger theoretical framework compared to academic capitalism which focused on answering “what” was happening. Yet, academic capitalist ideas were

reflected in the two-good framework and Slaughter and Leslie's and Slaughter and Rhoades' works provided an in-depth background to many of the complex issues examined by Weisbrod and associates. For example, academic capitalism provided a strong explanation to the changes and pressures in the research environment. Weisbrod et al. further articulated the issue by presenting the situation as a dilemma and explaining how institutions were incentivized to limit access to research knowledge. Weisbrod et al. (2008) posited, "In short, the university has the incentive to limit knowledge dissemination, even if only for two or three months – a period often held to be insubstantial – to generate revenue for the long-run advancement of its basic research or other element of its mission," (p. 5). Slaughter and Leslie's (1997) initial publication was referenced in evidence to support the two-good framework, but Slaughter and Rhoades' (2004) update was not referenced.

The primary research questions for Weisbrod et al. revolved around how institutions accomplish balance between mission and revenue and whether this balancing act changed the definition of higher education. More specifically, the research explored: how schools compete, how they finance themselves, and what social role each type of college and university plays within the industry of higher education (Weisbrod et al., 2008). The two elements of an institution's behavior, deciding how to raise revenue and how it should be spent created the "two-good firms": revenue-good and mission-good of the two-good framework. The two-good firms distinguished

between the competing notions of maintaining the educational mission and the need for financial resources in institutions. Both activities hinge upon the individual school's competitive position, specifically in relation to the institution's goals, and their plan to finance those goals (Weisbrod et al., 2008). An institution's competitive environment in this theoretical framework is linked and at times rationalized by revenue-good and mission-good activities.

Social role (or mission) and market economics are important components in the basis of the two-good framework. Weisbrod et al. (2008) relied on several assumptions: a) services sold profitably do not need public subsidy; b) services which cannot be sold profitably will not be provided by schools in the for-profit sector or by public and non-profit institutions without subsidies; and c) an institution's ability to generate revenue affects its ability to advance its mission and serve its various beneficiaries. Services that cannot be sold profitably are because beneficiaries are too poor to pay or the benefits are so dispersed that the beneficiaries could not be excluded from the benefits. These assumptions also created the underpinnings and rationale for how the authors conceptualized the public good ideal versus profit-making in higher education. From that vantage point, Weisbrod and associates hypothesized that all schools would take advantage of opportunities to make profit, but the for-profit sector would only undertake profitable activities. Furthermore, the public and non-profit institutions would undertake some unprofitable activities, essentially those that advance their

missions sufficiently to justify the losses (Weisbrod et al., 2008). The complexity of investigating this phenomenon was not lost on Weisbrod et al. who stated that they had to “simplify to comprehend” (p. 59).

First, each school is viewed as a producer of one or more “mission goods” (Weisbrod et al., 2008). Mission goods are considered those commonly found in the social mission of higher education including, teaching, research and public service (Weisbrod et al., 2008). Within and between different sectors of higher education, institutions are committed differently to these goals. However, the authors claim that the teaching of undergraduates is traditionally and continues to be the primary goal of higher education in the United States. In addition all three components of higher education’s social mission are embedded in and reflective of public good ideals. Weisbrod et al. (2008) affirmed, “Each (social mission) has been widely judged to be socially – for all of society – valuable and worthy of provision, but each is privately – for the individual provider – unprofitable” (p. 3). The conclusions of the two-good framework illustrate that schools provide teaching and basic research, even when these activities are unprofitable for the school. Furthermore, institutions finance these “mission activities” through traditional businesslike revenue-generating activities (Weisbrod et al., 2008). It has been argued that these businesslike activities became more visible and radical for publicly-subsidized institutions during periods when state budgets were in crisis (Jones & Wellman, 2010; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Second, Weisbrod et al. (2008) assume institutions are struggling to earn more funds, thus devoting resources to “revenue goods” where the goal of the activity is solely financial. Revenue-generating activities included those surrounding the production of tuition, donations, research, patents, endowments, and other forms of income as well as lobbying for government-aid. While not all revenue-generating activities were automatically considered revenue goods, the test used to establish revenue or mission good was simple and precise. The test was referred to as the “but-for” test and posed the question: “would the activity have been undertaken if it was clearly unprofitable?” (Weisbrod et al., 2008, p. 68). If the answer was no, the activity was expected to be profitable and was considered a revenue good. Weisbrod and colleagues alleged that many universities and colleges were pursuing revenue from new sources, once overlooked and referenced licensing of school symbols, logos and mascots on everything from “clothing to caskets” as one example of a new revenue good (p. 6). For public and nonprofit institutions, the distinction between doing what was profitable and what advanced the mission was the epicenter of Weisbrod et al.’s investigation.

The two-good framework was developed through in-depth exercises of comparing and contrasting the different types of institutions, public, non-profit private and the for-profit private sector. This technique helped to illuminate the similarities and differences in how institutions worked to achieve their missions and unearthed differences within sectors too (Weisbrod et al., 2008). Like Slaughter and Rhoades,

Weisbrod and associates focused on faculty and research. Yet, they also expanded their examination to include rankings, reputation and branding; student recruitment, tuition and institutional financial aid strategies; academic programs and distance education; lobbying; fundraising; athletics; and president and athletic coach hiring processes and compensation packages (Weisbrod et al., 2008). Working from their backgrounds in non-profit organizational research, Weisbrod et al. approached the research from a top-level perspective, viewing higher education as an industry similar to other industries where multiple forms of ownership exist (e.g. hospitals, museums) and runs contrary to the mission-good notion. They relied on this background to provide parallel examples, arguing that while the higher education industry was unique, it was not all that different from other business industries (Weisbrod et al., 2008). Their macro-approach was reflected in the large data sets used to inform their study, including the Council for Aid to Education, National Association of College and University Business Officers, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, National Science Foundation, Center for Responsive Politics, National Collegiate Athletic Association, American Council on Education, the *USA Today* database of contracts and compensation packages for Division I coaches, and several others (Weisbrod et al., 2008). Much of the methodology was described in broad statements referring to examining relationships between certain data points and analyzing data for patterns within sectors and between sectors.

The tension between mission and money was evident from their analysis and was the central theme of the two-good framework. As an example, Weisbrod et al. explored the “harvesting” of reputation through an examination of advertising, branding and related activities, focusing on nonprofit private and public institutions. They considered activities such as online advertising for prospective students and donors, use of reality television shows such as *Tommy Lee Goes to College*, *Road Rules*, and *While You Were Out*, “free publicity” which they operationalized as articles in *The New York Times*, and institutional preoccupation of rankings in national publications (Weisbrod et al., 2008). Findings indicated that change in rank in the *U.S. News & World Report* over a five-year period had no effect on enrollments or applications. Their sample was limited to those institutions listed in the top 25 from 1990-1995 compared to 1995-2000 (Weisbrod et al., 2008). Yet, they concluded that institutions were “compelled” to take rankings seriously, to dedicate resources, and in some instances to manipulate measures to raise scores or rankings (Weisbrod et al., 2008).

The annual rankings issue of *U.S. News & World Report* was referred to as the “swimsuit issue” because of its popularity and high sales, especially among out-of-state and international student markets (i.e. higher tuition-paying students) (Weisbrod et al., 2008, p. 189). And while Weisbrod and associates cited studies which had shown that the resources schools spend to improve their rankings had no effect on improvement in educational quality (Ehrenberg, 2000; Machung, 1998 as cited in Weisbrod et al., 2008),



a trend widely supported by other scholars (Couturier, 2006; Heller, 2002; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) has been the repurposing of institutional need-based financial aid for merit aid to attract the brightest students or tuition discounting to attract nonresident undergraduates who pay higher tuition. As stated previously, institutional resources are limited and the redeployment away from need-based aid impacts access, the mission good of supporting students who are unable to pay the full tuition price. Applying the two-good framework to this scenario, the activity of “harvesting” a reputation can be viewed as a revenue-good. Furthermore in this example, the investment of resources allocated to improving rankings was at odds with the social mission or mission good. Weisbrod et al. (2008) warned that in fact it was the mission of an institution to which the school’s reputation was “ultimately anchored” and that revenue-orientated activities should not compromise the mission.

Broadly, the concepts of mission-good and revenue-good in the two-good framework appear straightforward. Yet within the analysis of issues, the mission- versus revenue-good became more complex and demonstrated how interwoven institutional activities were. Weisbrod et al. (2008) emphasized that the two boxes of mission activities and revenue-generation activities were not exclusive and that some activities would not “neatly” fit into either category. Instead the boxes were positioned as “valuable tools” for understanding the choices confronted by all schools (Weisbrod et al., 2008). All decisions, Weisbrod and associates argue are related to issues of pursuing

revenue and choosing how to spend it to advance an institution's mission. In other words, the pursuit of revenue for public and private non-profit institutions was a "double-edged sword – indispensable for financing the social mission but a danger to the mission at the same time" (Weisbrod et al., 2008, p. 8). Weisbrod et al. (2008) concluded that there was a need for debates in the public policy arena regarding the acceptability of forms of revenue by higher education institutions because "money and mission matter, but pursuing one does not assure achieving the other" (p. 294). This statement also alludes to a public accountability rationale, one further articulated in academic capital formation.

The two-good framework was used to shed light on issues in higher education that have been widely studied as individual issues, but not fully understood as an industry. The framework provided a strong and compelling argument of the difficulties faced in institutional decision-making. For a public land-grant institution preparing for the twenty-second century, the two-good framework was an important lens in which to view perceptions of institutional activity and in essence, institutional will. The two-good framework moved beyond academic capitalism – seeing student and parent as consumer and institution as marketer to the drilled-down effects and motivation of institutional decisions. However, the two-good framework falls short in explaining how the findings will affect institutions and ultimately their students. Both academic capitalism and the two-good framework explored issues related to the public good ideal

in higher education and access, but failed to answer the question, so what? What does a shift to the private good/learning regime and the tough choices related to mission- and revenue-goods mean for students, in particular first-generation and low-income students? Failing to make this connection exposes a primary criticism of higher education literature, claiming that research is not practical or useful for administrative decision-making, especially when it comes to issues of moral reasoning or social justice<sup>7</sup> and professional practice (St. John, 2009). A third theoretical framework, academic capital formation was also used to guide this study to provide a link to student outcomes and applicability.

The lack of clear procedures and detailed methods is also a weakness of the two-good framework because it would be difficult to replicate their findings. Both Weisbrod et al. and Slaughter and Rhodes used data sources and anecdotal examples from higher education institutions to build their theoretical ideas, but without clear theoretical grounds (in terms of larger social theories) or descriptions of research methods for how they reached their conclusions. As a result, their conclusions could be perceived as flawed or biased. It is likely that the magnitude and complexity of the topic complicated empirical study, but this aspect is important for understanding the conclusions and applicability of the findings. For instance, what may be viewed as politically constructed arguments without empirical research could be problematic for policy choices and development (St. John et al., 2011).

Weisbrod et al. drew generalizations about higher education institutions based on their study, but their conclusions may overextend concepts and miss other critical issues due to their oversimplification and heavy reliance of aggregate data sources. An in-depth case study analysis may illuminate contradictions to the theories or provide further justification. The two-good framework recognized differences between sectors of institutions but did not account for institutional culture and history, two key constructs in organizational studies (Clark, 2004; Tierney, 1999). For instance, land-grant institutions have a unique history and background that may illuminate different values placed on revenue and mission goods. The significant challenges facing higher education and their call for public debate begs for more institutional involvement and those who represent the heart of institutions—faculty. The study at hand addresses the need for a more in-depth, localized exploration.

Academic capitalism and the two-good framework set the stage for the current landscape facing higher education institutions. Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) argued that there had been a shift from the public good regime to one of the private good. Weisbrod and associates (2008) concluded that institutions were pursuing more revenue goods and that public accountability measures were needed to examine what types of revenue-generating activities were legitimate in nonprofit colleges and universities. Both theoretical frameworks used the institution or the industry as their foci of study but were unable to link their conclusions to implications for students and

families who are ultimately impacted by institutional, industry and public policy decisions. The third theoretical framework used to guide this study, academic capital formation fills this gap. Academic capital formation is connected to academic capitalism and the two-good framework through the fundamental ideology of the public good, but examines the heart of these issues, access, from a different fundamental perspective.

### **Theoretical Framework Three: Academic Capital Formation**

Academic capital formation (ACF) is an emerging theory introduced by St. John, Hu and Fisher (2011) in *Breaking through the Access Barrier* and further articulated by St. John (2012) in the edited edition of *Readings on Equal Education*. Simply stated, academic capital formation represents the process and outcomes of educational attainment. Academic capital formation refers to the process that occurs when students make educational transitions including the processes of college readiness and preparation, college choice and enrollment, student success and retention, graduation and career choice, and giving back to communities or families/family uplift (St. John, 2012). These educational transitions are often perceived and operationalized as outcomes in educational policy and study. Moreover, they signify the fundamental objectives for institutions of higher education.

Academic capital is defined by St. John et al. (2011) as the “knowledge of educational and career options and support navigation through educational systems and professional organizations” (p. 1). Institutions of higher education and their

stakeholders play key roles in structuring and promoting academic capital acquisition. St. John et al. (2011) noted that acquisition of academic capital occurs through access to support systems and networks of individuals to expand opportunity, assuming college and career aspirations. In addition, academic capital is considered cross-generational, meaning that it can be transmitted across generations (St. John et al., 2011). For example, the GI Bill is an example of legislation where academic capital played a crucial role for soldiers returning from World War II and, as a result has been credited for expanding America's middle class (St. John et al., 2011). In this way issues of class reproduction and transformation are connected to the notion of the public good ideal referenced by Slaughter and Rhoades in academic capitalism and Weisbrod and associates in the two-good framework.

Unlike academic capitalism and the two-good framework, academic capital formation focuses on students, programs and policies and then draws conclusions and implications appropriate for institutions of higher education rather than for the larger structure of institutions of higher education. This difference is reflected in the theoretical underpinnings as well. Whereas organizational and change theory provided the basis of academic capitalism and the two-good framework which were then later complemented by economic and sociological concepts, social theories served as the origin of academic capital formation. Academic capital formation was formulated from theories of cultural capital, social capital, and human capital, applying these concepts to

college and career aspirations. Academic capital formation also significantly differs from the two previous frameworks in that it is rooted in grand theory<sup>8</sup> or larger social theory, specifically social reproduction theory as adapted by Pierre Bourdieu (St. John et al., 2011). Within Bourdieu's grand theory, the construct of "field" or social context is a key concept and scholars have noted the need for further empirical study and specification of the concept within academic capital formation (Winkle-Wagner, 2012). These theories and concepts are more fully described below.

Although not identified as "field" by Slaughter and Rhoades or Weisbrod et al., their studies of higher education institutions and the industry serve to further explain the current landscape. Academic capitalism and the two-good framework explain what is happening within institutions as they are situated in society, whereas academic capital formation provides an understanding of what the actors might do or contribute within this landscape. In this way, academic capitalism and the two-good framework complement and advance the emerging theory of academic capital formation. The perspective of academic capital formation offers more insight into individual agency and how one deals with the social structural issues explained by academic capitalism and the two-good framework. Academic capital formation also sharpens the focus on underrepresented students, a population that may be at the greatest risk of being negatively affected by the changes. Academic capital formation theory, then, is an important lens to bring to the current study because it provides a comprehensive

perspective of the complexity of social processes related to access and allows for consideration of what faculty members (as actors), could contribute to changing access through their interactions with students.

The theory of academic capital formation has its foundation in the balanced access model, thus it was necessary to explore the balanced access model and its contributions to academic capital formation.

### **Development of Academic Capital Formation: The Balanced Access Model**

The original principles and many of the underlying concepts in academic capital formation (St. John et al., 2011) were introduced in St. John's (2003) *Refinancing the College Dream*. Many of the components surrounding the issue of access had been addressed separately in the literature (e.g. Heller, 1997; Hossler et al., 1998; Leslie & Brinkman, 1987; McPherson & Schapiro, 1991; Pelavin & Kane, 1988, 1990), but a comprehensive and systematic approach was missing (St. John, 2003). The balanced access model provided a framework to better understand the academic and financial policies related to access in an effort to address the opportunity gap, problems facing colleges, states and the federal government, and to improve coordination of public funding strategies (St. John, 2003). Figure 2 on the following page presents the balanced access model.

Several theoretical frameworks were used in constructing the balanced access model, but the model was grounded in John Rawls' 1971 theory of social justice. St. John

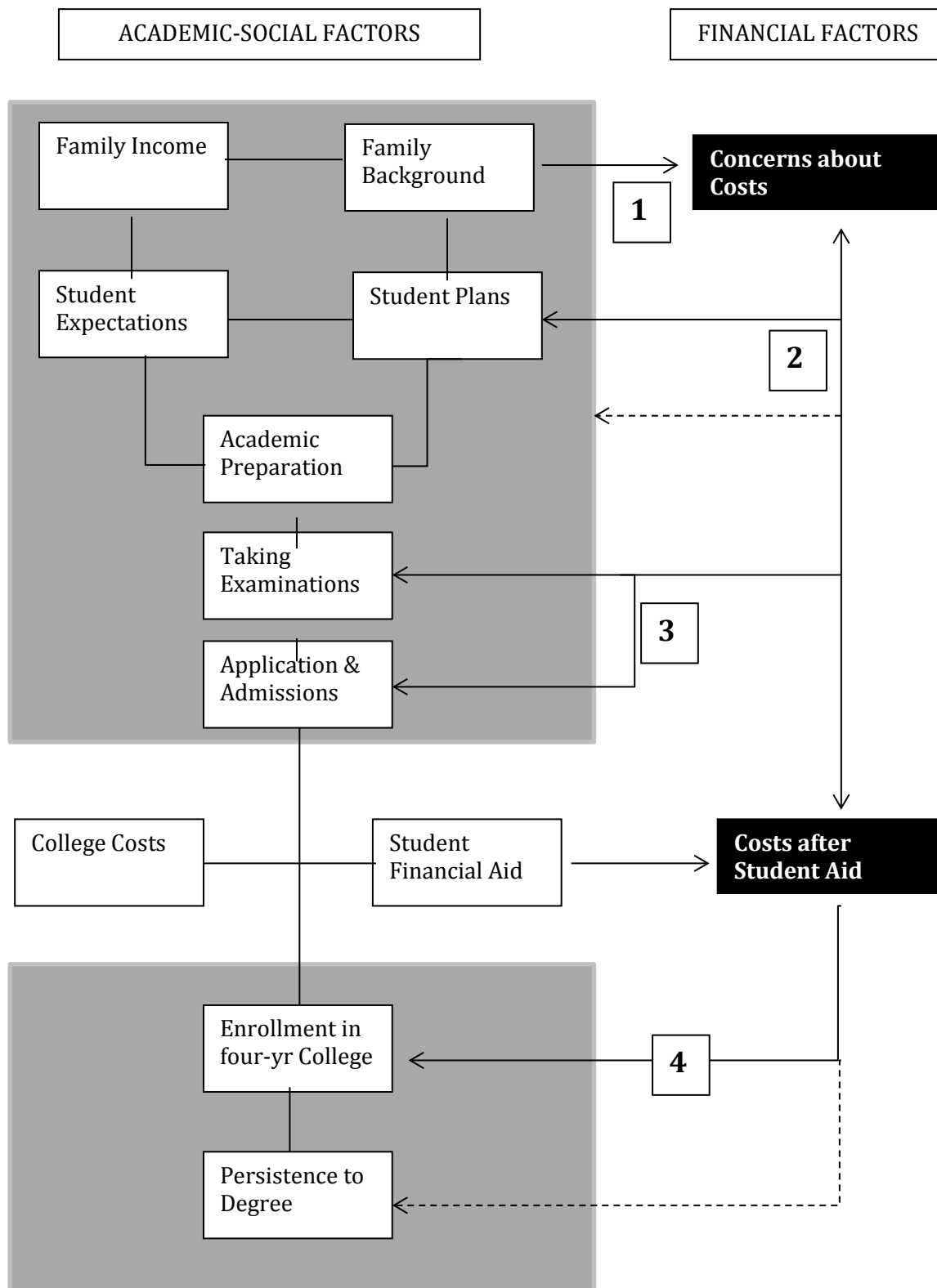


used this theory to frame the government role in promoting postsecondary opportunity, focusing on the principles of equal treatment of all, just savings, and equity of opportunity (St. John, 2003). St. John also incorporated economic theories of human capital and price response, social theory related to educational attainment, and student college choice theory, as well as concepts in cultural capital and policy science. Many of these frameworks were carried over in conceptualizing academic capital formation but there was a key difference in his use of social justice and social reproduction theory which is more fully described below.

In his efforts to find a more complete explanation to the opportunity gap, St. John developed the balanced access model to account for the indirect and direct effects of financial aid, as well as the role of academic preparation. The balanced access model was developed from extensive research of educational policy within the context of presidential terms (1970-2000) and by conducting statistical analyses and modeling on large national datasets (St. John, 2003). The balanced access model included the following four steps: 1) family background and income influence student expectations and plans; 2) student expectations and plans influence academic planning and courses taken in high school; 3) having taken a college preparatory curriculum in high school influences students to take college entrance exams and to complete applications for college; and 4) planning for college (i.e. taking college preparatory curriculum and applying for college, influences college enrollment) (St. John, 2003).

The links between financial access and academic access also become visible in the balanced access model (fig 2). The direct effect of family income influencing a family's concerns about college costs and ability to pay for college is illustrated by linkage one. In linkages two and three, family concerns about college costs and ability to pay (i.e. perceived unmet need) influences student aspirations and academic preparation, including a taking a college preparatory curriculum, entrance exams and applying for admission. Linkages four and five illustrate the direct influence of actual unmet need on enrollment and ultimately persistence to degree (St. John, 2003). The balanced access model revealed how finances influenced academic preparation, college enrollment and persistence and exposed weaknesses in the widely accepted academic pipeline model.

**Figure 2: Balanced Access Model (St. John, 2003)**



In many ways, the balanced access model was an attempt to address and understand the inequality of access, specifically the opportunity gap that emerged in the 1980s (St. John, 2003) and to counter the widely accepted academic preparation rationale put forth by the National Center for Education Statistics' which St. John claimed had "fundamentally misleading conclusions" about access (p. 170). In addition, St. John reexamined the logic and data set used by the National Center for Education to test his balanced access model (St. John, 2003). The balanced access model included the steps of NCES's pipeline model, but the steps were reconstructed to recognize the influence of family finances and concerns about college costs on students' academic preparation (St. John, 2003).

In the 1997 report, *Confronting the Odds: Students at Risk and the Pipeline to Higher Education*, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) offered an academic preparation rationale to explain the disparity between income and racial and ethnic group participation in higher education. NCES's report was based on an analysis of the National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-94 (NELS: 88), a national database tracking the high school graduating class of 1992 from eight grade to college (NCES, 1997). The key findings were a correlation between academic preparation and enrollment. The report suggested that minority and low-income students could gain access to four-year institutions by taking the right courses in college, completing college entrance exams and applying for admission (St. John, 2003). St. John argued that the

NCES's report overlooked how finances influenced the marginal differences found in enrollment rates and claimed that the report was biased toward the upper class (St. John, 2003). The report also proposed a "pipeline to college" model which included the following: aspirations, academic preparation, entrance exams, college application, and enrollment (NCES, 1997). St. John (2003) criticized the pipeline model for failing to consider the role of finances on expectations, plans, timing of college entry, choice of college, test-taking and college applications, pointing out that given the costs associated with entrance exams and admissions applications, NCES's 1997 report obfuscated the effects of college costs (St. John, 2003).

Through his reanalysis of NELS: 88 data, St. John concluded that NCES's findings were "fundamentally misleading," flawed, overemphasized the role of entrance exams and college applications, and assumed that finances were adequate for all families (St. John, 2003). For example, St. John (2003) found that parental and family concerns about college varied substantially across income groups, with a majority (79 percent) of students from low income families (incomes below \$25,000) reporting that they were very concerned about college costs compared to a small fraction (16 percent) of students from high income families (incomes above \$75,000). NCES had attributed the financial concerns to poor information and did not include their finding in their data analysis (St. John, 2003). St. John offered an alternative hypothesis: the financial concerns could have influenced students' plans and expectations and thus their

academic preparation, likelihood of taking entrance exams and submitting admission applications. Moreover, St. John questioned NCES's use of steps in the pipeline model that could also be viewed as financial barriers, given that entrance exams and applications were not free (St. John, 2003). St. John hypothesized that financial concerns and barriers could explain the larger proportion of low income students compared to high income that did not enroll after controlling for academic preparation (St. John, 2003). The balanced access model supported this premise. In sum, the balanced access model demonstrated the direct and indirect effects of financial aid, identified linkages between financial and academic aspects of access, and offered a framework that connected broad theoretical concepts to public policy.

In the balanced access model, St. John relied heavily on the 1971 Rawls theory of social justice and only referenced social reproduction theory. However, Rawls' theory of social justice was not reflected in academic capital formation and social reproduction theory was a primary focus. Because this shift represents a foundational change in St. John's theory and arguments, I briefly describe the social justice theory used in constructing the balanced access model.

Rawls' theory was founded in the work of Kant, an eighteenth century German philosopher, and based on his beliefs of social welfare. Rawls' social justice theory differed from a pure social welfare viewpoint in that it accounted for individual talents and industry markets. Rawls' principle of equal treatment of all related to expanding the

opportunity for access to postsecondary education, but was applied by Rawls as equal treatment for all, based on talents to account for the imperfect markets in K-12 and higher education (St. John, 2003). The just savings principle was related to the notion of cross-generation responsibility, claiming that capital was and should be passed on from one generation to the next, and provided the rationale for public investment in higher education through taxation (St. John, 2003). The equity of opportunity principle rested on the notion that cross-generational investment was needed to maintain a just social system and assumed that taxpayers were willing to pay for a system that provided equal opportunity (St. John, 2003). Rawls also argued that the first principle, equity of opportunity, was the first priority given his “lexical order” where certain liberties could only be restricted for the sake of another liberty (St. John, 2003). In other words, equal opportunity for all (i.e., low income students for St. John) should take priority over equity of opportunity (i.e. reducing the average cost for the majority) (St. John, 2003).

Rawls’ social justice theory laid the groundwork for St. John and he used these concepts to rationalize the need for policymakers to reconsider issues of access. Like the two-good framework, St. John (2003) posed difficult questions about competing demands such as, “should middle-income taxpayers have relief from taxes while their children are in college?” and argued that efficient use of tax dollars should be balanced against broader issues of equity and access (p. 29). Yet, St. John (2003) claimed that changes beginning in the 1980s to taxpayers’ willingness to support higher education

and other social institutions illustrated a new conservative political ideology and shift in the lexical order (St. John, 2003). St. John further claimed that critical reflection about the moral responsibilities of a just society was needed before adopting educational policy, especially those related to K-12 reform and even the shift in congressional funding from grants to loans for postsecondary education (St. John, 2003). Similar claims were made by Slaughter and Rhoades and Weisbrod et al. in their studies, but without a theoretical rationale to back their assertions. Unlike previous theories, Rawls' social justice theory accommodates the concept of agency, or a person's ability to choose his/her actions.

In academic capital formation, St. John maintained his stance about access and the importance in considering societal and individual needs, but the justification of his argument changed. Instead of relying on a just society rationale, St. John applied social reproduction theory to rationalize why access to higher education was important. Social reproduction theory is further detailed later in this chapter but generally speaking, social reproduction relied on the economic benefits for individuals and society in promoting access versus social justice. For St. John, the end goal, promoting concern for access and encouraging policy analysis and action to remedy issues of access, was similar despite the change in theory. Although St. John did not explicitly address the change in his use of theory, the shift may have been in response to the continued fiscally conservative ideology in today's policy landscape.



The findings from St. John's 2003 work were significant and the model served as a foundational framework for reiterations and eventually academic capital formation. The relationship between theory, educational outcomes and policy was focused upon and strengthened in later reiterations of the balanced access model and in academic capital formation (St. John et al., 2011). The balanced access model was revised by St. John in 2006 and by St. John and Musoba in 2010. In 2006, the balanced access model was adapted by St. John to include K-12 reforms, postsecondary encouragement support services, and public financing of higher education (St. John et al., 2011). St. John reframed steps in the academic pipeline and included others, such as degree attainment and a commitment to give back. The model was also revised by St. John and Musoba in 2010 to examine how colleges could expand opportunities for underrepresented students to achieve academically (St. John et al., 2011).

In both revisions, outcomes were restated as critical educational transitions and this was carried over to academic capital formation. By viewing outcomes as educational transitions, St. John claimed to have learned new insights by fully examining the social mechanisms across the transitions (St. John, 2012). Additionally, St. John acknowledged the importance of "field" in understanding the social process versus explaining only the outcome (St. John, 2012). The findings from the studies advanced the balanced access model but also complicated the simplicity of the step-by-step approach of the model.

This may be why academic capital formation moved away from a logical, step-by-step model to an overarching theory explaining educational processes and transitions.

### **Academic Capital Formation: An Emerging Theory**

Similar to the balanced access model, academic capital formation was born out of frustration with educational reforms that were failing to rectify the disparity in access to higher education for low-income students and underrepresented racial and ethnic groups (St. John et al., 2011). Academic capital formation also continued St. John's quest to better understand the dimensions of policy interventions and the ways in which policy dimensions were linked to outcomes. St. John et al. (2011) argued that since the 1980s the focus of public educational policy shifted away from the principle of equal opportunity and toward emphasizing "excellence," especially evident through K-12 reform. Yet, St. John and his colleagues claimed that given the decline in high school graduation rates between 1980 and 2000 along with the increases in disparity between racial and ethnic groups in college-going rates, the reforms of the last three decades had failed, or at minimum not worked as intended (St. John et al., 2011). St. John and colleagues argued that interventions and public policies needed to be adjusted to facilitate academic capital formation in families historically denied access to higher education because of high attendance at poor schools, minimal need-based aid, and a social environment that reinforced transitions from school to work, welfare, prison or other pathways besides college.

Therefore, St. John et al. (2011) developed the new theoretical framework to provide a conceptual understanding of comprehensive interventions that integrated the economic and social aspects of educational attainment and they positioned academic capital formation at the center of educational policies and social, educational, and financial interventions in order to more fully examine connections to educational outcomes. As stated before, academic capital formation refers to the complex set of social processes and behavioral patterns related to educational attainment. These processes are also connected to generational-uplift and can reinforce family and individual expectations, commitments and actualization of postsecondary education (St. John et al., 2011). Figure 3 presents the theory of academic capital formation.

Many of the conceptual frameworks found in the balanced access model were also included in academic capital formation, but with a different role or emphasis. St. John et al. (2011) acknowledged that a commitment to social justice in policy and action was pivotal in their work on academic capital formation. But instead of relying on Rawls' theory of social justice, the authors expanded the use of Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction and focused more on the social actions related to educational attainment (St. John, et al., 2011).

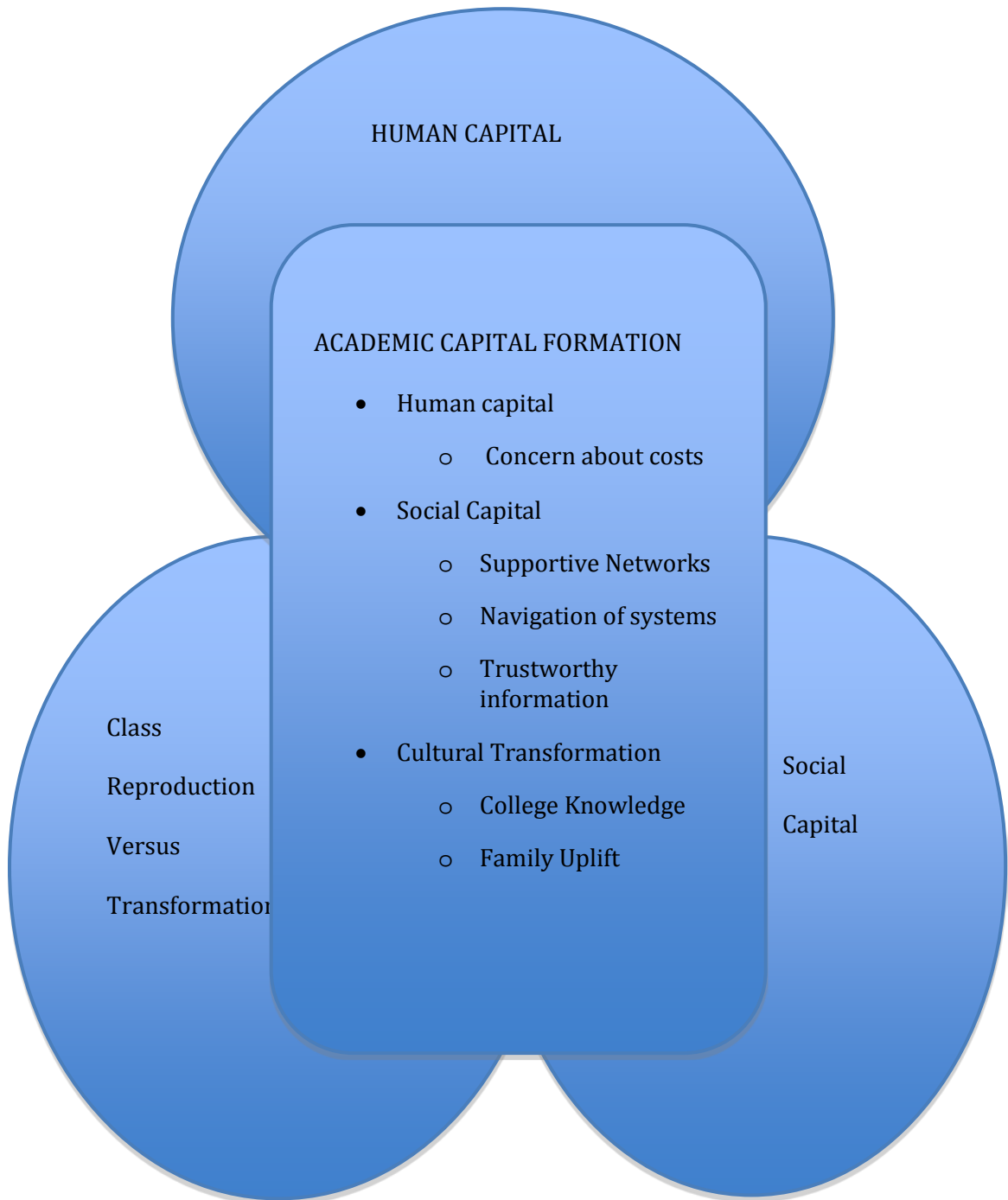
This shift represented a move away from a just society or social welfare rationale based in Kant and a move towards a capitalist and economic rationale based in Marxists viewpoints. Regardless of the change in foundational theory, the goals of illuminating

issues of inequality and access to higher education were the same for both frameworks. Social, cultural, and human capital theories also played much bigger roles in academic capital formation as compared to the balanced access model; yet, others such as college choice theory were reflected in academic capital formation, but they did not serve as primary theories. A brief overview of each capital theory is presented below along with its role in academic capital formation.

### **Human capital theory.**

Gary Becker's human capital theory (1964) originated from his attempt to explain the substantial growth in income during the 1960s in the United States after physical capital and labor had been accounted for and he concluded that human capital played a major role as an economic driver. As an example, individuals who had higher earnings based on education also paid higher taxes and contributed more substantially to the economic welfare of their state (St. John et al., 2011). Human capital theory stated that individuals and governments make decisions about investing in education based on analyses of expected returns both monetary and non-monetary (St. John, 2012). Specifically, individuals make decisions about pursuing education after weighing the costs and benefits of earning a college degree, considering the costs of education relative to the benefits of other expenditures and with consideration of future earnings (St. John, 2012). On the other hand, human capital theory states governments decide to invest tax dollars in education versus other priorities relative to the analyses of future

**Figure 3: Social Processes Integral to Academic Capital Formation (St. John et al., 2011)**



tax dollars and economic developments (St. John, 2012). In both situations, action is intentional, goal orientated, and assumes a rational choice model where one has access to full information and has the ability to weigh options to make the best decision (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). It has been well documented that students and families, especially low-income students often do not have full access to trustworthy information (St. John et al., 2011). In this way, human capital theory alone was insufficient in explaining issues related to access and a better understanding was gained by viewing human capital theory constructs within an academic capital formation framework. Additionally, Becker's interpretation of human capital theory accounted for education, skills, knowledge and other personal attributes such as health, but was applied in academic capital formation narrowly with only consideration for aspects related to education.

Human capital theory has been widely used to document the relationship between student aid and college enrollment, especially for low-income students and to justify the federal and state policy for student aid (St. John et al., 2011). In academic capital formation, however, human capital theory was focused on explaining the social processes influenced by the perceptions and concern about the ability of students and their families to pay for college. For example, St. John and associates explored how family and student concerns about cost could inhibit academic preparation efforts and thus affect enrollment and how once in college, concerns about costs could influence

engagement during college as well as degree attainment. St. John et al. expanded upon the use of human capital theory by using other capital theories to compensate for the questioned assumptions that individuals are fully able to ponder costs before making decisions to apply for college and the linear assumption that monetary amounts have an ordinal relationship with funding (St. John, 2012). Within academic capital, human capital theory was focused on discerning the complexities related to concerns about costs and the direct effects of money or the lack thereof. Range of educational choices, the decision of students and families to engage in academic preparation, degree attainment and give back were also explored in the development of academic capital formation using a human capital theory lens.

### **Social capital theory.**

St. John et al. (2011) relied on the foundational work of James Coleman in social capital theory, taking into consideration the critique of Habermas regarding the functionalist frame, to explain the mechanisms of social capital, or one's networks, social obligations, and connections. Coleman (1988) defined social capital by its function, stating that it was "a variety of different entities with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate action of actors...within the structure" (p. 598). In other words, social capital is anything that facilitates individual or collective action, and as an example can be generated by networks of relationships, reciprocity, trust, and social norms (Coleman, 1988). In

Coleman's conception, social capital was a neutral resource that facilitated action, but whether society was better off as a result depended entirely on how the individual choose to use it. Coleman was concerned with open and closed social networks, how connected people were to each other and to each other's social networks, and viewed action as determined by or dependent on structure. Habermas critiqued this approach and distinguished between action and structure, stating that experiences should not be subordinate to systems (St. John et al., 2011). St. John (2012) agreed with this critique and argued with Coleman's notion that by implementing a new function, the intended outcome would follow, describing it as "overly simplistic or even false" (n. p.).

Furthermore, St. John argued that based on his own empirical research, social mechanisms and structures could be altered through intervention, but replicating interventions would not guarantee the same outcome in a new circumstance. St. John also moved from the functionalism aspect of social capital, which claims inequality serves a function in society. This adaptation was important in academic capital formation because it allows for the notion that barriers to the formation of social capital can be overcome, even without changes to structure. This stance was backed by other scholars and proponents of social capital theory who believed that not only could structures change but microsystems such as culture and organizations could be altered as well.



In academic capital formation, social capital theory was used to reconsider engagement and three social constructs were created, trust, information and networks (St. John et al., 2011). The social construct of trust involved students and their families' trust of social environments and the extent of obligations held, such as certain social and financial familial obligations. Information provided the basis for action and was considered inherent in social relations. Finally the construct of networks focused on the norms within the network, which could be considered powerful and other times fragile forms of social capital (St. John, 2012). In the most recent version of academic capital formation, these constructs are restated as navigation of systems, trustworthy information, and supportive networks with networks singled out as the "central" social construct of ACF (St. John, 2012).

Similar to Coleman's focus on norms within social networks, academic capital formation addressed the role of norms as social capital in the social integration process regarding educational attainment. St. John also advanced Coleman's aspect of norms within networks by considering the notion of both open and closed networks (St. John, 2012). For example, St. John et al. acknowledged that norms of behaviors within families could be considered caring in intent even if in action that the norms did not support educational attainment. Academic capital formation suggested that comprehensive interventions, those including considerations for each facet of academic capital (i.e. cultural, human and social capital) could open closed familial and cultural systems to

assist in the social construction of new knowledge of opportunities, or norms and behaviors that might alter family patterns (St. John, 2012). In this vein, St. John and colleagues strived to understand how the social capital processes of navigation of systems, trustworthy information, and supportive networks changed for students and their families, especially when aid guarantees and support services were in place.

### **Cultural capital theory.**

As previously stated, St. John moved from a social justice rationale based on Kant to one of social reproduction based in Marxian theory in his development of academic capital formation theory. This represented a shift from a foundational social theory to one grounded in economics. Instead of rationalizing access to higher education because of a need for a “just” society or it being the “right” thing to do, St. John et al. argued for access to higher education because of the economic benefits to society as a result of a more highly educated and productive society. This rationale is aligned with the conservative political climate and is also reflected in the rationale of President Obama’s rationale for the Big Goal (Lumina Foundation for Education, 2009). Rooted in Pierre Bourdieu’s larger social reproduction theory, the concepts of cultural capital and habitus are key aspects in academic capital formation (St. John et al., 2011).

Pierre Bourdieu was a conflict theorist who asserted the importance of economic structure in perpetuating and maintaining inequality (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Bourdieu was interested in privilege and how it was perpetuated and reinforced in society. He

was also discontented by the physical, material, and economic conditions which did not explain the perpetuation of inequality and social stratification (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Therefore, Bourdieu studied the intangible system of preferences and built a theory of social reproduction based on notions of cultural mores, rules, norms and symbols that he claimed aided in the reproduction and resistance to social inequality (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). In other words, Bourdieu's class reproduction theory refers to the underlying cultural forces that reinforced and conveyed social class across generations (St. John et al., 2011). Within social reproduction theory, Bourdieu also states that one's opportunities are predicated on one's abilities or merit (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). This idea connects the economic outcomes of social reproduction to education and training through the notion of meritocracy where individuals are rewarded and advance in society based on ability and talent rather than on class and privilege (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). As St. John (2012) notes, Bourdieu's theory is very useful in building an understanding of the intersection between families and educational systems. Yet, he emphasizes that one must approach the theory from a post-positivist stance to not assume deficit thinking.

Bourdieu's full theory of social reproduction is complex and includes notions of cultural capital, field, habitus, and taste (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). However, St. John et al. primarily focuses on cultural capital and habitus as social constructs in academic capital formation and reframes the overall concept of social reproduction as cross-generation

uplift versus social class reproduction (St. John et al., 2011). Bourdieu altered his definition of cultural capital during his career but concluded that cultural capital was an indicator and basis of class position which included cultural attitudes, preferences, and behaviors that were conceptualized as tastes used for social selection (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). In other words, cultural capital could include skills, abilities, tastes, preferences or norms that act as a form of currency in the social realm (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Bourdieu stated that cultural capital could be acquired in two ways, through one's social origin or family and through education or schooling (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). In academic capital formation, cultural capital is understood as the accumulated knowledge of education in the family system and positioned as the "nexus" between the education and family systems (St. John, et al., 2011). St. John et al. (2011) uses family knowledge or college knowledge, as constructed by experiences in educational systems college as his proxy for cultural capital. This includes the capacity to envision oneself and family members as college students, understanding the importance and steps in academic preparation for the workforce or graduate education, and the ability to use support structures to discern appropriate pathways through educational systems (St. John et al., 2011). Acknowledging the changing landscape in educational settings, pressures for educational attainment, and role and definition of academic preparation, St. John and associates apply the concept of cultural capital to focus on the interactions between the

cultures of learning in families in relation to the change processes advocated through and embedded in educational systems.

The second construct in academic capital formation rooted in Bourdieu and “integrally” linked to cultural capital is *habitus*. Habitus as defined by Bourdieu refers to the sum of one’s cultural capital, or the series of dispositions that one has internalized and will employ (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Habitus could be considered a “tacit, replicating, internal patterning system that predetermines strategy” or recurring behaviors patterned through culturally transmitted habit rather than conscious intention (St. John et al., 2011, p. 40). Studied and noted by other scholars, the socialization towards a particular habitus begins in early childhood and continues into adulthood below the level of consciousness and language (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). In addition, habitus is embodied in class and becomes a “generative practice” (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). In academic capital formation, St. John and colleagues are concerned with habitus as substantiated through familiar and communal beliefs and behaviors which could undermine college enrollment or encourage education attainment. Family uplift is used in academic capital formation to reference the patterns of behaviors within families that supported the acquisition of college knowledge and expansion of educational opportunity across generation. St. John et al. (2011) applies the concept of habitus to focus on the difference between the two types of documented patterns: 1) replicating patterns that reinforced educational attainment across generations; and 2)

transforming patterns that support uplift within an extended family. Examples of patterns which could limit family uplift include: a) valuing work to the point where students would drop of high school to work, b) teen pregnancy, c) bias for class maintenance or the notion that one generation should not strive to better than the next. In order to conceptualize how habitual patterns could be changed, St. John and colleagues emphasize social give back and recreating educational opportunities across generations. St. John et al. (2011) avoids encouraging individuals to leave his or her community because of the important role family plays in students' educational attainment. Easing concerns about costs, originally noted in the sphere of human capital, is also closely related to notion of family uplift because of the substantial and fundamental role finances play in families and day-to-day life.

Initially, cultural capital was presented as the third capital theory integrated into academic capital formation, but in St. John's most recent restatement the role of Bourdieu's social reproduction theory is strengthened and the concepts of cultural capital and habitus are considered before human and social capital theories. All three concepts however, continue to be presented from a viewpoint of equal influence.

### **Summary of Academic Capital Formation**

In academic capital formation, human, social and cultural capital theories are brought together to explain the social actions of students and their families in the formation of academic capital or the attainment of higher education (St. John et al.,

2011). Academic capital formation reconsiders the role of engagement in educational attainment, just as the balanced access model provides a framework for considering both academic and financial policies. Conceptually, the theories account for academic and financial considerations of access but they also are expanded upon to include a broader set of social aspects of educational attainment. Examples of social actions that are not accounted for in the balanced access model include students' and their families' need for timely and accurate information from trustworthy sources and for students and families to understand that the promise of opportunity is real and achievable. These actions are rooted in Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction. Within academic capital formation they are represented by cultural capital and the tension between class reproduction and class transformation. Like Bourdieu, early concepts of social attainment and human capital that allude to cross-generational uplift do so from a positivist and functional perspective, meaning that the theories do not account for social progress, status maintenance and social regress. St. John et al. (2011) emphasizes their post-positivist approach in applying theory in academic capital formation. This perspective allows for a more complete analysis of the access phenomenon by recognizing that progress, maintenance and regress are possible outcomes across generations.

Unlike the other frameworks used in this study, academic capital formation signifies the intersection of the theories from which it is built upon: human, social and

cultural capital theories. Thus, the theories used to construct academic capital formation are clearly linked to the social constructs of the model and are best explained within descriptions of the original work. The benefit and significant contribution of academic capital theory is its comprehensive approach, but it is possible that each aspect of the model (i.e. cultural capital theory, human capital theory, and social capital theory) could stand alone and they have in previous studies.

Methodologically, the theory of academic capital formation was tested and reconceptualized from extensive quantitative and qualitative studies conducted on three large-scale comprehensive intervention programs constructed to promote access and academic success for underrepresented students: Twenty-first Century Scholars, Washington State Achievers, and Gates Millennium Scholars (St. John, et al., 2011). Each of the programs provides financial aid, support services, and encouragement for low-income students in high school and college. These programs are considered successful and exemplar based on outcomes such as more participation in advanced courses, enrollment, persistence, and attainment. Because the programs focused on low-income students, the model of academic capital formation was originally tailored to this group.

St. John et al. conducted a mixed-methods analysis of surveys, administrative records, and focus groups interviews for those eligible for the three programs. The interviews with students provided the most compelling information in the development of their theory (p. xiv). Interviews included both recipients and nonrecipients of the



program benefits and their families as participants, which provided an important analysis group. St. John and colleagues collected a series of data from high school students and their families from 2000-2004. St. John et al. provided a detailed description of each program and the data sources for each program in Chapter 2. Data was analyzed data by comparing and contrasting between the programs on the social processes of educational attainment. These social processes included family and community engagement, academic preparation, college choice, engaged learning and academic success. These processes are reflected in the academic pipeline and balanced access model and reconceptualized into the larger theoretical framework of academic capital formation.

In sum, four social processes emerged from St. John et al.'s analysis regarding how students overcome the access barrier. The processes are rooted in human and social capital theory and include: 1) easing concerns about college, 2) supportive networks, 3) navigation of systems, and 4) trustworthy information. Underlying these concepts are two patterns of social behavior including 1) college knowledge, a form of cultural capital; and 2) family uplift or habits that support the acquisition of college attainment across generations (i.e. habitus). Together these constructs make up the theory of academic capital formation. In their study, St. John et al. (2011) concludes that there is a significant relationship between involvement in interventions and subsequent outcomes. For example, St. John et al. cites the role of encouragement services for

students and their influence on parental empowerment. In addition, they conclude that the design and structure of the intervention or program along with the care of practitioners plays a significant role in helping students gain access, especially to college preparatory courses. Although they could not establish causality based on their methods, St. John et al. is able to clearly document complex patterns of educational transitions and social relationships (St. John et al., 2011). No statistical difference was found in degree attainment rates between students in the programs and those who were not in the program, but St. John et al. cited difficulties in quantitative data comparisons, especially with regard to available student aid data.

### **Critique of Academic Capital Formation**

Academic capital formation is conceptualized as a new framework for the study, design and evaluation of educational and policy interventions (St. John, 2012). St. John et al. rationalizes the need for a new theoretical framework because the foundations of social and economic theories provide different explanations for the ways in which educational capital is formed and transmitted across generations (St. John, 2012). The complexity of the educational landscape and persistence of the opportunity gap demonstrate the need for a new and advanced method for studying access. Winkle-Wagner (2012) argues that the theory of academic capital formation offers considerable insight into social transformation or the disruption of social reproduction. Yet, while the attempt to untangle the social processes underlying educational attainment with

consideration for both economic and social theory is notable and useful on one hand, it could also be viewed as chaotic and overwhelming on the other. The differing foundational underpinnings of an integrated theory must be clearly noted and this made academic capital formation somewhat difficult to use in application.

In addition, St. John et al.'s treatment of Bourdieu's social reproduction theory must be further detailed as it could be considered a weakness of academic capital formation. Cultural capital is a central concept in Pierre Bourdieu's larger social reproduction theory and was initially cited by St. John et al. as the third capital theory integrated in academic capital formation. In St. John's restatement of academic capital formation, the role of Bourdieu's social reproduction theory is strengthened, but still presented parallel with human and social capital theories. One weakness of academic capital formation is the positioning of social reproduction theory as equally relevant to social and human capital theories. This could be considered a weakness of the theory due to the overarching role of social reproduction in academic capital formation. For instance, cross-generational uplift is referenced within each discussion of the three capital theories and appears to serve as the ultimate rationale for the formation of academic capital. In further restatements of ACF, one might expect for Bourdieu's social reproduction theory to move into a more central role. For now, St. John et al. intends for the notions rooted from Bourdieu's social reproduction theory to be only one aspect of the academic capital formation theory. Winkle-Wagner (2010) warns that using only

portions of Bourdieu's theoretical scaffolding of social reproduction, such as only cultural capital could lead to distortions or mistreatments of the theory; furthermore, an important aspect of cultural capital is its complexity and its reliance on other social concepts of field and habitus. The notion of field is briefly discussed in the restatement of ACF, but not fully explained. Yet, St. John and associates presents academic capital formation as an emerging theory and call for issues such as these to be studied and fleshed out.

For the current study at hand I advance Bourdieu's notion of field and connections between various fields. Field or social context is the social realm where cultural and social capital concepts are given meaning and their value is determined (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). As Winkle-Wagner (2010) notes, "it is only within a particular field that cultural capital holds value, produces an effect or even exists...like a game each field has its own rules or system of valuation that determine the conditions of entry or inclusion" (pp. 7-8). A field is often viewed as a school, is considered class-based, and can reinforce cultural capital of family origin (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). More specifically, stakeholders in education, faculty, administrators and staff may unconsciously reward acquired cultural capital from his or her family over a student who has not (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). By understanding faculty perceptions of access and thus their fields, an additional layer of the nuances of the access puzzle is uncovered.

All three theories used to guide this study – academic capitalism, the two-good framework, and academic capital formation – are concerned with the notion of field, although none specifically articulated this in the intentional manner as Bourdieu had intended. In this study, I expand upon the theories by reconsidering the role of the concept of field and the connection of higher education as a field to other fields such as the market or public interest. Academic capitalism, the two-good framework and academic capital formation are also similar in that they are theories built from their authors' life work. In this regard, each author used a substantial amount of work in formulating the theory, but more needs to be done to empirically advance the theories. For example, academic capital formation has been focused on students and programs and has not yet been applied to non-student populations. By understanding the additional actors in the access puzzle and the complexity of the field in which educational attainment takes place, more intentional interventions or policies will be possible.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The diverse literatures of the access challenge, environments of higher education, faculty perspectives and culture, as outlined in this chapter, reveal much about access and higher education today. All of the literature provides both contextual and comparative information applicable to this study. Further, each serves a unique purpose, exposing and elucidating the gap addressed by this study. That gap was the

shortage of research on the perspectives of tenured and tenure-faculty on issues of access with a research, land-grant institution.

Examination of the history and current research on access illustrates the complex nature of the problem. In addition, the contentious environment surrounding the field higher education signifies the need for more research and the involvement of faculty in the future of their institutions, even education as a social entity.

The construct of academic capitalism highlights the importance of the environments, within which faculty must function. The two-good framework explains the difficulties facing their places of employment. Academic capital formation provides the reality and implications for underrepresented students of the changing landscape that faculty work. It reveals underpinnings of social transformation versus social reproduction and the power that faculty have in determining the value of academic capital in four-year institutions.

From this literature and theoretical framework, the case of faculty perspectives of access is contextualized, conceptualized, and clarified. Yet, these literatures and theories were not the ending point for this project. They did not determine the findings. Rather they supported the research design, data analysis, emerging themes, and ultimately, the case description.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

Through examination of faculty members' perspectives, this study attempted to discover and document the tenured and tenure-track faculty perspective of access within the current landscape of higher education. Because of the project's aim to explore the social and human aspects of access, especially in a realm where quantitative methods did not exist, the methods of qualitative inquiry were appropriate and preferable. In them, "the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). Qualitative research focuses on "meaning in context" and emphasizes "the socially constructed nature of reality," the relationships between researcher and what is being studied, and the situational aspects of the inquiry (Merriam, 2009, p. 2). Because of the research question, the complexity of the issue, and need for detailed information in order to holistically understand the case, the understanding sought could come best through qualitative methods (Creswell, 2003).

The following chapter is organized around the broad principles of qualitative inquiry and the tradition of case study in mind. Sections on epistemology, the role of the researcher, and ethical considerations provide information about researcher positionality and the perspective from which I approached the study. The study design and research questions orient the reader to the following sections of detailed

procedural information on sampling, including a description of the research site, data collection, and data analysis steps. A description of a pilot study used to inform the current study adds to the understanding of the origins and development of the study design, as well as the trustworthiness of data which is also more fully described. Finally, limitations are considered. In total, this chapter describes methods and philosophies underpinning this study, detailing the course of this research exploring faculty perspectives of access.

### **Research Epistemology**

A qualitative case study approach was used in this study and the method and tradition determined the various choices described in subsequent sections. First, qualitative inquiry allows for the careful examination of multiple perspectives from multiple sources (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research is especially useful in situations in which a problem or issue needs to be explored because current theories are incomplete or do not exist and when the context of the situation is as important as the issue being explored (Creswell, 2011). The research design is also emergent, flexible and responsive to changing conditions of the study in progress (Merriam, 2009). These features were crucial in answering the central research question of this study.

More specifically, “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world,” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). A qualitative approach is



appropriate in this study because of the complexity of the topic and because few, if any, quantitative measures exist. In addition, a holistic understanding of the faculty perspective is needed and the ability to uplift diverse voices, multiple realities is important in this study. Success in this study is reliant on uncovering the phenomena through understanding faculty perspectives, essentially capturing their “lived” experiences (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). The “naturalistic inquiry” in a real-world setting also provided an opportunity for “discover-orientated” research (Merriam, 2009, p. 7). This inductive strategy is one that attempts to build abstractions, concepts, themes, even hypotheses from the data gathered in the field to enhance an understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998).

A discussion of the underlying philosophical foundations of qualitative research, especially the nature of reality or ontology and epistemology, nature of knowledge are important to fully positioning this study among other qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). A worldview is a term used to describe “philosophical assumptions” that guide research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 39). A worldview can also be referred to as a paradigm and is important because it guides and influences research. Morgan (2007/2008) emphasized this perspective, “adopting a paradigm permeates every aspect of a research inquiry...research inherently involves epistemological issues about the nature of knowledge and knowing” (p. 34). This study lies in the category of interpretive research where I believe that research is socially constructed; that is, there

is no single, observable reality (Merriam, 2009). This research is approached from a constructivist epistemology, an assumption that multiple realities and interpretations of a single phenomenon, even an event, such as a car accident exist and that meaning is co-constructed by researcher and participant (Merriam, 2009). Researchers in a constructivist frame look for the complexity of views and negotiate their meanings socially and historically, even culturally (Creswell, 2007). The goal of the research is to rely on participants' views of the situation (Creswell, 2007). Success requires broad, general questions and for the researcher to listen carefully to make sense of the meanings others have about the world (Creswell, 2007). Merriam noted, "researchers don't 'find' knowledge, they construct it" (Merriam, 2009, p. 9).

Ontologically speaking, what is the nature of reality is the experience of being; it is subjective and is made possible by intersubjective agreement (Kvale, 1996). The rationalist-constructivist view states that a universal reality exists, only correspondingly suitable to an individual's notion or experience of that reality (Stake, 1995). Additionally, people can only know what they know, or experience. The rationalist-constructivist stance addresses epistemology and includes the very important assumption that the experience a person has includes the way in which it was interpreted (Merriam, 2009). The viewpoint also demonstrates the inter-dependent relationship between epistemology and ontology and how both informs and depends on the other. In order to study the nature of reality, a qualitative researcher must be open to participant

experiences, seeking commonalities and differences in the examination (Kvale, 1996). The existence and variety of socially-constructed realities is inevitable, accepted, and embraced from this vantage point (Shaker, 2008). Thus, this study sought closeness to participants and multiple sources of data to corroborate and enhance the understanding of a participant's perspective. The knowledge gained in this study was passed to the reader in rich-thick description, vicarious detail of experiences in which meaning was embedded and available to readers to create their own naturalistic generalizations from.

Two theoretical approaches also shaped the study. First, this study was constructed and pursued from a pragmatic framework. A hallmark of pragmatism is the focus on the "the consequences of research, on the primary importance of the question asked rather than the methods" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 41). Pragmatism is often referred to as pluralistic and oriented to practical application and the phrase "what works" is used to describe the relationship between the researcher and that being researched (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Morse (1991/2008) encapsulates the pragmatic paradigm, "Research methodologies are merely tools, instruments to be used to facilitate understanding," (p. 157). Pragmatists agree research takes place in social, historical, political, and other contexts and that the focus is on the practical implications for the research (Creswell, 2007). An emergent study thus lends itself to pragmatism where various methods, data sources and analytical strategies could come into play.

Second, a postmodern perspective was also influential in this study.

Postmodernism upholds that knowledge claims must be set within the conditions of the world today and in the multiple perspectives of class, race, gender, and other group affiliations (Creswell, 2007). The postmodern frame facilitates the uplift of marginalized groups, experiences and voices (Creswell, 2007). In this study, the voices and experiences of participants may not be those of groups historically denied access, but their perceptions will ensure a more complete understanding of the access puzzle. True to a postmodern frame where researchers are focused on changing ways of thinking versus calling for action based on these changes (Creswell, 2007), the perceptions of tenured and pre-tenured faculty set within the circumstances facing society and educational institutions today provide a new way of considering and theorizing about issues of access. Finally, postmodernist also view the world consisting of multiple “truths” and no one “truth” with a capital “T” (Merriam, 2009). As such, during the research process, I attempted to “deconstruct” text, bringing to surface issues of power, domination, oppositions, and inconsistencies while celebrating and capturing diversity among ideas and notions (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009).

In this study, the interplay of constructivism, pragmatism, and postmodernism facilitated the full exploration of the phenomenon, interweaving of viewpoints and inclusion of multiple perspectives and realities. Collectively, theoretically, and methodologically, the frameworks enhanced the study by supporting a holistic

description of the case. Each played a role in the study's outcome. The role of the research played yet another and is now further described.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009); it is highly personal research (Stake, 1995). Qualitative research "champions" the interaction of researcher and phenomenon (Stake, 1995). As a result, a discussion of the subjectivities or biases of a researcher are an important component of qualitative research. This is often referred to as positioning the researcher or researcher reflexivity and is specifically a process of *critical* reflection on the "human as instrument" element in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) states that rather than trying to conceal or eliminate researcher bias, it should be identified and monitored in how it shapes the research design and interpretation of data. "[Qualitative] research is not helped by making it appear value free...it turns away from the presumption of sanitization" (Stake, 1995, p. 95). Such clarification allows the reader to better understand the researcher's values and assumptions and allows for a more transparent presentation of the interpretations, ultimately leading to trustworthiness in the study's findings (Merriam, 2009). The role of researcher also affects the study's research design (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, this discussion precedes the research design.

In this section, I present my preconceptions and experiences in relation to the issue of access to higher education. I consider my opinions of the context, including the current landscape of higher education, research and land-grant institutions, as well as my preconceived expectations of the faculty role in solving the access problem. This was especially important in case study research since the case and context are infinitely complex and interconnected (Stake, 1995). I establish my position in the research process and describe the strategies employed to manage this role.

Access to higher education is a topic that has personal meaning and importance to me. Similarly, land-grant institutions and what they represent in our nation for equality and opportunity is at the center of my passion for higher education. Education has made a significant difference in my life (and that of my family) and I benefited from educational experiences at two land-grant institutions. I was a first-generation, Pell eligible (low-income), minority student with an average ACT score fifteen years ago. Today, I worry about if I would have been pushed out of my state's land-grant institution.

My experiences as well as my observations of what is happening around me as an employee at a land-grant institution drove my interest in this topic. In my administrative role, I witness the difficult decisions university leaders are faced with in preparing a land-grant, research institution for the future. While this gives me direct knowledge of the context of higher education and an institution, I am not a faculty

member and I am not privy to their perspectives. Though I am working towards the goal of joining faculty, I am not passionately interested in studying faculty life either, per say. Instead I am interested in the faculty because through my administrative role, I have observed faculty referenced as the “heart” of an institution and the “driving force” of priorities and mission.

It should also be known that I view student access to higher education as a problem or challenge that requires tough conversations and bipartisan partnership. During a recent talk, St. John emphasized that policies did not need to be national in scope nor was money or financial aid enough to make a difference (St. John, personal communication). Instead, St. John asserted that care and concern at a campus level could influence the ideology of policies and university research could work to build partnerships to solve social problems (St. John, personal communication). This research is driven by a similar perspective and assumption of the access problem.

Regarding the context of the case, I am cognizant of the complexities of trying to become a world class research institution while remaining committed to the social-good mission. I recognize that a revenue stream is necessary for an institution to prosper in the twenty-first century and to meet its access mission (Weisbrod et al., 2008). Yet, I value the land-grant mission and its assumption of providing opportunities for a state’s students to quality four-year education. Given the growing disparity between racial and ethnic, low-income, and first-generation students at two-year and four-year institutions

(St. John, personal communication), I believe the role of a land-grant institution has become even more critical in the access conversation. I wonder about the role that faculty play in the issue of access. I wonder if faculty members fully conceptualize the role they play in influencing student opportunity and the value of “capital” that they bring with them to the university. I am uncertain if faculty members have thoroughly considered how they influence and embody the institutional mission.

In the beginning of the study, I did not pretend to know what participants would say or what would emerge from the other data sources. I viewed my role in this research process as a listener and learner and worked with the goal of understanding participants’ perspectives. During the interviews, I interacted in a typical faculty-to-student manner. This was not uncomfortable or unexpected as faculty members are accustomed to teaching students and often see themselves as the expert. My administrative experience was advantageous as it allowed me to quickly follow the conversation and complexity of the issues that faculty discussed. This led to very productive interviews and a large volume of data in the study.

I continue to see the complexity of the issues surrounding the access puzzle and the landscape of higher education. This allowed me to be open to participant perspectives and to the findings as they emerged. I actively pursued my own subjectivities and discussed them in relation to the findings with my dissertation chair and peer reviewer. I remained committed to the purpose of the study, to explore faculty



perspectives and was determined to illuminate this viewpoint versus my own. I strived to uphold good case study protocol by being patient, reflective and willing to see another view and multiple views of the phenomena (Stake, 1995). I treated the uniqueness of individual experiences as essential to understanding the case and embodied an ongoing interpretive role to holistically examine the case (Stake, 1995). For instance, as Stake (1995) recognized, a proportion of the data in qualitative research is impressionistic, picked up informally by the researcher; yet, it is the continued exploration of data that refines or replaces the earliest observations. Also, as expected in an in-depth case analysis by a researcher with a constructivist worldview, I assigned value to participant's realities or did not view all realities of equal merit (Stake, 1995). I collected data until reaching saturation (Creswell, 2007) and actively reflected during the research study, noting intersections of personal perspective with the data.

### **Research Design**

The tradition of case study was used in this qualitative research study and is broadly defined as an "in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). Yin (2008) provides a more specific description in light of the research process behind the case, "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (p. 18). Yin emphasizes that case study is most appropriate when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are unclear. Although boundaries between phenomena and context may be unclear, the

quintessence of case study research is the case itself, “it is a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries,” often intrinsic boundaries (Merriam, 2009, p. 27). This is a qualitative case study exploring tenured and tenure-track faculty perspectives of access to higher education. The case was bounded by institution, participants, and time. This included a single institution, tenured and pre-tenure track faculty in given disciplines, and a six month period for data collection. The institution, participants’ employment setting, and their commitment to lifelong learning and discovery as a tenured or pre-tenured faculty member in a certain discipline made the context indistinguishable from the phenomena. Thus, a case study approach was most suitable for this study.

A single case was purposefully selected to represent an instrumental case (Stake, 1995). Creswell (2007) describes a single instrumental case study as one where “the researcher focuses on an issue or concern and then selects one bounded case to illustrate the issue,” (p. 74). Stake (1995) states that case study research is fitting when one is interested in cases for both their “uniqueness and commonality...we seek to understand them. We would like to hear their stories” (p. 1). The two principle uses of case study are to obtain descriptions and to understand interpretations of others (Stake, 1995) in complex social units where multiple variables of potential importance exist (Merriam, 2009). An instrumental case allows for investigation of something beyond the case or unit of analysis itself (Stake, 1995). This study aims to capture the “complex

action, perception, and interpretation” of the faculty’s perception of access and to provide an intensive, holistic description of the case of faculty at a research land-grant institution (Merriam, 2009). The case was a “specific, complex functioning thing” (Stake, 1995) explored through extensive data collection, drawing on multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2007). This included documents, observations and participant interviews.

This case is also characterized as analytical or heuristic, differentiated from descriptive studies by the complexity, depth and theoretical orientation (Merriam, 1998). The analytical case offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand readers’ experiences; moreover, these insights play an important role in “advancing a field’s knowledge base” (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). Discovery of new meaning and confirmation of what is known also helps readers to arrive at their own conclusions, or make naturalistic generalizations (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). Naturalistic generalization is an important feature in single cases where larger generalizations are not possible due to the single instance (Stake, 1995). Merriam (2009) reiterates that “the unit of analysis, *not* the topic of investigation” characterizes a case study (p. 41, emphasis in original). Therefore as applied to this study, the unit of analysis, tenured and pre-tenured faculty members at one institution were studied to enhance an understanding of access and to advance the notion of field in academic capital formation.

This study was not an effort to develop a theory or model of faculty perspectives of access, nor was the intent to test theoretical frameworks. Instead, an understanding of faculty as stakeholders in education and agents of family uplift or social reproduction was sought. I strived to critique and offer ideas for new uses of theory and to expand the knowledge base (Merriam, 2009). A theoretical orientation was defined by Merriam (2009) as a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories that support and inform research. A strong theoretical orientation helped to guide the research questions and the study design. It helped to make sense of the large amount of data collected and to understand complexities of the case since it was embedded in the institution and disciplinary homes of the faculty members. In sum, the concepts of academic capitalism and the two-good framework and the emerging theory of academic capital formation helped to identify the research problem and influenced the research question, data analysis and interpretation of findings.

### **Research Questions**

The research question guiding this study is: What are the perceptions of access and issues related to access as described by tenured and tenure-track faculty at a predominately White, Midwestern land-grant, research institution? Simply stated, how do faculty members perceive access to higher education? In addition, there are several sub-questions guiding this study. They are:

1. How does the faculty perceive the current environment of higher education?

2. How does the faculty describe the public policy ideology related to higher education with in state and national contexts?
3. What does the faculty perceive as its role in promoting and supporting access?
4. How are institutional history and mission reflected in faculty descriptions of access?
5. Do perceptions of access reflect institutional will and policy?

The subsequent paragraphs outline the specific procedures used to conduct the research and analyze data; descriptions of the single case site, participants and multiple data sources are also fully described. In the spring of 2011, I conducted a pilot study which significantly shaped the current study. A summary of the pilot study and its findings conclude this chapter.

### **Sampling Procedures**

True to the tradition of qualitative research, nonprobability sampling methods were utilized in order to “discover what occurs, the implications of what occurs, and the relationships linking occurrences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). The most common form of nonprobability sampling, purposeful sampling, stands based on the assumptions of discovery, understanding, and gaining insight (Merriam, 2009). Patton (2002) argued that “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth” (p. 230). Therefore, a sample transpires from seeking individuals and

sites for study because they can “purposefully inform” an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2007). In other words, samples are selected from which the most can be learned (Merriam, 2009). In this study, two levels of sampling were necessary in selection of the site and participants.

For this study, a single site was purposefully selected in which to explore faculty perceptions of access. First, I established the criteria used to guide case selection. This included two institutional characteristics, mission as a land-grant university and designation as a research institution. I used institutional characteristics to define the site because of how institutional mission shapes faculty positions, roles and responsibilities (Hearn & Holdsworth, 2002). As Jones and Ewell (1993/1997) noted, “Institutional cultures that support undergraduate education are characterized by a core set of policies and practices that consistently reinforce this priority. Most important are those that affect the terms and conditions of faculty employment,” (p. 587). I also theorized that the type of institution mattered to faculty members in their selection of employment and therefore faculty at a land-grant, research institution could relate to and speak about access issues more readily.

Institutional land-grant missions are usually reflected in open-access admissions policies, research priorities and service endeavors (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 1998). In each of these arenas, faculty is affected. Open-access admissions policies influence the types of students in the classroom and

research labs. Research priorities shape national prominence, funding opportunities, and collaborative or interdisciplinary efforts. Service activities facilitate a connection to the state and awareness of the state's well-being. The designation as a research university was especially important to examine the issue of access within the current environment of higher education. As documented in academic capitalism and the two-good framework, the environment of higher education has changed significantly and tremendously shaped faculty experiences, especially in the area of research (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Weisbrod et al., 2008). The combination of institutional characteristics of a foundational commitment of access and aspirations of a major research university served as an information-rich case for examining faculty perspectives of access. I narrowed the group of institutions to select one in the Midwest which was similar to other Midwestern institutions in student demographics, programs, and mission.

Like case selection, sample selection within the case was aligned with the assumptions of qualitative research and purposeful sampling. Documents were limited to institutional data sources and personal documents (Merriam, 2009) created by faculty, such as their course syllabi. As Merriam (2009) noted, personal documents are reliable sources for discerning a person's attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world. Observations were also limited to faculty-led meetings and activity. These restrictions for faculty-authored documents and faculty-led meetings were important in understanding the case of faculty perceptions and to restrict the influence of the

carefully crafted messages produced by campus marketing experts. However, these types of documents such as campus strategic plans, institutional websites, and undergraduate recruitment materials were reviewed to provide “a stimulus for paths of inquiry” which could then be investigated through interviewing (Patton, 2002).

As is true in many qualitative studies, I relied most heavily on the words of the participants themselves to form an understanding of the case. Faculty participants were selected through maximum variation sampling techniques to identify the widest possible range of perspectives (Creswell, 2007). Gardner’s (2009) single institutional case study investigating doctoral education provided a model and target for the current study. Gardner’s study involved 38 faculty members from seven disciplines, noting that it was important to examine an institution from “multiple disciplinary perspectives, representing disciplinary diversity” (p. 388). Gardner used time-to-degree to select the best and worst performing departments and then selected faculty participants from within those departments. I used a similar strategy in selecting faculty from two groups of departments, those that had the most undergraduate majors who were Pell eligible and those that had the least. Pell eligibility was used because it is a widely accepted indicator of low-income status, a group most likely to be impacted by changes to access. First-generation status was unavailable because this data point was collected at time of admission beginning in 2010.



To select the departments, the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid created a list of Pell eligible students during the fall 2011 semester. Students who had not submitted the Free Application for Financial Aid (FAFSA) were considered non-Pell eligible. The list of students was sent to Registration and Records where total enrollment for fall 2011 was pulled and Pell eligibility was indicated based on the list from Scholarships and Financial Aid. Visiting and non-degree seeking students were excluded, but international and part-time students were retained in the list. Registration and Records returned a list of newly created student identification numbers with student major, and status of Pell eligible, international and part-time enrollment. I created a table of aggregated data based on major, showing totals of enrolled students who were Pell eligible and non-Pell eligible for each undergraduate major, including students had not declared a major. I retained international and part-time students in the total calculations, even though international students are automatically ineligible for Pell grants. This decision was made to most accurately reflect the student population in a given department.

Next, I cleaned the data to consolidate and reassign students in instances where the program did not have associated tenured faculty lines. Then, I matched the programs to their home department (e.g. Spanish = Department of Modern Languages). I calculated the average percentage of Pell eligible students enrolled in a major (18.53%) which I used as base in selecting departments from the high and low ranges. Students

who had not declared a major were excluded from the average calculation since no department assignment could be made. Then I calculated a department's percentage of Pell eligible students and selected those departments at the highest and lowest ranges in comparison to the average. The departments were then categorized into broad disciplinary groups to protect confidentiality of participants. The disciplinary groups are presented in Table 1 with details about the associated departments. The number of tenured and tenure-track faculty is presented in a range to protect the confidentiality of the department and participants.

The participants who informed this study were selected through a mixture of purposeful sampling strategies including, criterion, maximum variation, and stratified purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2007). Criterion-based sampling was employed by listing the attributes essential to the study and then using various strategies in order to locate the participants who met the criteria (Merriam, 2009). The sample included tenured or tenure-track faculty with a minimum of two years of service at Midwestern University, and who had taught an undergraduate course in the last two years.

It was important for the faculty members who informed this study to be tenured or tenure-track because of the associated responsibilities and commitment of the institution inferred from this type of position. As McPherson and Schapiro (1999) note, the institution of tenure centers on issues of authority and academic freedom and it

*Table 1*

**Summary of Department Descriptives by Discipline Category**

Discipline Category		Percentage of Pell Grant Eligible Students Enrolled- Fall 2011	Low/High compared to MU Department Average (18.53%)	Number of Tenured or Tenure-Track Faculty
<b>Agricultural Life Sciences</b>	Department 1	26.85%	High	11-20
	Department 2	25.53%	High	21-30
	Department 3	21.58%	High	31-40
<b>Arts &amp; Humanities</b>	Department 1	24.75%	High	11-20
	Department 2	22.90%	High	11-20
<b>Social Sciences</b>	Department 1	27.38%	High	11-20
	Department 2	26.77%	High	11-20
<b>Business</b>	Department 1	13.29%	Low	Less than 10
	Department 2	11.00%	Low	11-20
<b>Physical Sciences</b>	Department 1	11.86%	Low	21-30
	Department 2	11.83%	Low	21-30
	Department 3	10.36%	Low	11-20

increases the ability of faculty to shape institutional decisions and the institution as a whole. The authors argue that tenured faculty members are the stakeholders of the institution and control the “who, what and how of teaching and research” (McPherson & Schapiro, 1999, p. 92). Additionally, tenured faculty members have more independence and are charged to credibly assess research and public policy, even those considered “high-stakes” or in which their institutions may have considerable interest

(McPherson & Schapiro, 1999). The tenured faculty also carries the weight of the institutional goals for academic elitism. A minimum length of service equivalent to two years was appropriate to allow for a full transition of a faculty member into the culture of Midwestern University. Moreover, the criterion of teaching an undergraduate course within the last two years was important in selecting faculty members to ensure that he or she had been on campus interacting with undergraduates in the last year as opposed to leave on a sabbatical or on an administrative appointment. The criterion also facilitated the selection of individuals who were more closely affected by the open access aspect of the land-grant mission verse a faculty member who taught only graduate students or conducted research.

Upon selection of the departments, I secured a list of tenured and pre-tenure faculty for each department from the institutional office that maintains data on faculty. From this list, I was able to discern demographic data, apportionment, and years of service. Efforts to select a diverse sample based on rank, length of service, apportionment, age, gender, and ethnicity were made. I was unable to discern if a faculty member had taught an undergraduate course within the last two years from the data. Instead, I used apportionment in teaching as a guide and confirmed teaching in a participant questionnaire.

Next, I contacted department chairpersons informing them about the study, alerting them to the sampling strategy for contacting faculty in their departments, and

requesting access to observe any meetings (e.g., faculty meetings, committee meetings, etc.) that they felt would add value to the study (Appendix A). The observations were intended to capture general notions of how topics are discussed within the discipline and to provide the groundwork prior to conducting interviews with the faculty, when possible. Five departmental observations were conducted, three department-wide meetings and two committee meetings. Upon the chairpersons' acknowledgement, I e-mailed selected tenure-track and tenured faculty members in each department, sharing information about the study and inviting participation (Appendix B). Some faculty responded from the first e-mail and I sent others a reminder, reiterating the invitation and requesting participation in the study (Appendix C). Once participants indicated an interest in the study, I confirmed participation, scheduled the interview and requested answers to a brief questionnaire. The brief questionnaire asked for information on gender, race and ethnicity, educational history (degrees/institution), tenure and promotion dates, years of service, and administrative appointments (Appendix D). Collecting this information helped to confirm institutional data and ensure that I developed a stratified sample (Creswell, 2007) of participants, spanning multiple disciplines and backgrounds. All participants signed consent forms at the time of their interview (Appendix E).

### **Research Site**

Midwestern University, a pseudonym, is a predominately White institution listed by the Carnegie Foundation within the "Research Universities (very high research activity)" category. Approximately 25,000 students attend Midwestern University and of this, 18,000 are undergraduates. Ten percent of undergraduates are considered minority students in higher education (not Asian or White) and 71 percent are residents of the state. The incoming freshmen class includes an average of 4,000 students a year and the class average ACT is 25.3.

Of the total undergraduates enrolled full time in fall 2010, 66 percent applied for need-based financial aid. The financial aid office determined that 72 percent of those who applied for aid were eligible for need-based financial aid and almost all were awarded some type of need-based aid (including subsidized loans). Less than ten percent of students who were eligible for need-based aid had their need fully met (85 percent of student need was met for those who received aid). Approximately, sixty percent of undergraduates who apply for financial aid (excluding transfer students) borrow through a loan program. The average per undergraduate cumulative principal borrowed is \$16,664.

Programmatically, the institution offers a comprehensive array of undergraduate majors from traditional program in liberal arts and humanities to engineering, education, business and agricultural sciences. A broad set of activities, resources, and

opportunities are available to undergraduates. Undergraduate education is important and the general education curriculum was reconsidered and revamped to better address national concerns about student learning outcomes. Faculty engagement and leadership was instrumental in the campus-wide initiative.

Approximately 6,000 faculty and staff members are employed at Midwestern University. Of this 1,500 are faculty and 68 percent of these are tenured or tenure-track faculty (not including equivalent-rank such as professors of practice or research professors). Five-year trend data indicate that there were no significant increases or decreases in the categories of faculty except for professors of practice which have grown significantly from less than ten in 2007 to sixty in 2011. Of the tenure and tenured-track faculty, 70 percent are male and 30 percent are women; 83 percent are White.

Many faculty members have called Midwestern University home for a majority of their careers. The average age of tenure-track assistant professors is 38 years of age and associate professors is 49 years of age. The average age of tenured full professors is 59 years of age and associate professors is 50 years of age. An early retirement program offered by the University after the economic crisis in 2008 resulted in approximately seventy faculty members opting for a buyout.

The fiscal health of the Midwestern University was comparable to neighboring institutions in that the University faced its eighth budget cut in eleven years. Coping

with what Jones and Wellman (2010) referred to as the “new normal” for higher education, institutions were required to pay attention to cost management and efficiency on a continuing basis and as a result have become more reliant on a business-like way of thinking. Over the last five years, state appropriations to the institution were reduced or remained flat. It is important to note that the reductions were less significant compared to some peers in the region and that they continue to make up approximately 20 percent of Midwestern University’s operating budget. Like other institutions, the campus atmosphere at Midwestern University was impacted by the fiscal downturn of 2008. The theoretical frameworks of academic capitalism and the two-good framework were important in guiding the investigation of these issues in the current study.

Additionally, the timing of the study was significant and several internal and external forces made the question of access more salient. Midwestern University had undergone change in a majority of the key academic leadership positions on campus over a two-year time period. The institution prepared to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Morrill Act and to reaffirm its commitment to the state and its students. In addition, recent affiliation with new academic and athletic entities set the tone for all-campus goals to become more academically elite and to redefine the institution’s position among its peers. Success relied heavily on faculty productivity, achievement and commitment. Subsequently, the faculty at Midwestern University was an



information-rich case in which to explore perceptions of access. A single case allowed for the in-depth analysis characteristic of case study research.

### Participants

A total of 31 tenured or tenure-track faculty members were interviewed during the summer and fall of 2012. The 17 male and 14 female were from five disciplinary groups and tended to be non-minorities, even though a significant proportion self-identified as first-generational college graduates. A summary of participant demographics is presented in Table 2.

<i>Table 2</i>	
<b>Summary of Participant Demographics (n = 31)</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	17
Female	14
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
White	23
Non-White	8
<b>First Generation Status</b>	
First Generation	11
Non-First Generation	20
<b>Age</b>	
39 or younger	11
40-49	7
50-59	7
60 or older	6

An equal mix of faculty among disciplinary groups was sought, but was not achieved with regard to business. Several faculty members indicated a disinterest in participation because of workload. Others agreed to participate but cancelled last minute and chose to not reschedule. I also strived to achieve a balance of tenured and pre-tenured faculty members with a range of total years of service. Participants tended to be grouped at the high and low ranges in terms of years of service, with the majority having been at the University for five or fewer years. Although it was my intention to have more variety in years of service, most faculty members within the departments selected for this study were clustered in the upper and lower ranges. Table 3 presents the distribution of faculty participants in rank, years of service, and disciplinary home.

Participants' discipline category, years of service, tenure status and educational background (i.e. bachelor's institution type) are summarized together in Table 4. The table also includes the pseudonyms used in this narrative and allows association of these select characteristics with individual participants. In Table 4, rank is presented as tenure status and the range in years of experience are collapsed into fewer categories than in Tables 2 and 3. This adjustment further protects the participants' identities.

<b>Table 3</b>	
<b>Summary of Participants' Faculty Standing (n = 31)</b>	
<b>Discipline Categorization</b>	
Agricultural Life Sciences	7
Arts & Humanities	7
Business	2
Physical Sciences	8
Social Sciences	7
<b>Rank</b>	
Professor	12
Associate Professor	8
Assistant Professor	11
<b>Years of Faculty Service at Midwestern University*</b>	
1-5 Years	11
6-10 Years	6
11-15 Years	2
16-20 Years	3
21 or more Years	9

*\*Several participants had served on faculties at other institutions or served MU in another capacity before joining the faculty.*

**Table 4*****Participants' Combined Characteristics (n = 31)***

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Discipline Category</b>	<b>Years at MU</b>	<b>Tenure Status</b>	<b>Bachelor's Institution</b>
Alton Sanders	Physical Sciences	11+	Tenured	Private
Barry Green	Agriculture Life Sciences	11+	Tenured	Private
Bob Samuels	Agriculture Life Sciences	11+	Tenured	Public
Chad Roof	Agriculture Life Sciences	1-10	Pre-Tenure	Public
Cody Morgan	Physical Sciences	1-10	Pre-Tenure	Public
Dag Aguliar	Physical Sciences	1-10	Tenured	Private
Emily Eby	Social Sciences	1-10	Pre-Tenure	Public
Gary Jobes	Business	11+	Tenured	Public
Goldie Harper	Social Sciences	1-10	Pre-Tenure	Public
Hank Jensen	Physical Sciences	1-10	Tenured	Public
Heather Makey	Social Sciences	11+	Tenured	Public
Ingrid Velez	Arts & Humanities	1-10	Pre-Tenure	International
Jack Tucker	Arts & Humanities	1-10	Pre-Tenure	Private
Jamie Newman	Agriculture Life Sciences	1-10	Tenured	Public
Kami Kelly	Arts & Humanities	11+	Tenured	Public
Laura O'Connor	Arts & Humanities	1-10	Pre-Tenure	Private
Mae Lockett	Physical Sciences	11+	Tenured	Public
Marty Gore	Physical Sciences	11+	Tenured	Public
Mona Vice	Social Sciences	1-10	Tenured	Public
Niles Boyd	Business	1-10	Pre-Tenure	Public
Omar Pacana	Arts & Humanities	11+	Tenured	International
Penny Shanks	Agriculture Life Sciences	11+	Tenured	Public
Quincy Anderson	Agriculture Life Sciences	1-10	Pre-Tenure	International
Regi Schmidt	Agriculture Life Sciences	11+	Tenured	Public
Sara Alto	Physical Sciences	1-10	Tenured	International
Saul Peterman	Social Sciences	1-10	Tenured	Public

<b>Cont. Table 4</b>				
<b><i>Participants' Combined Characteristics (n = 31)</i></b>				
<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Discipline Category</b>	<b>Years at MU</b>	<b>Tenure Status</b>	<b>Bachelor's Institution</b>
Shawna Alkhatib	Physical Sciences	11+	Tenured	International
Sue Jones	Arts & Humanities	11+	Tenured	Private
Susana Milovich	Arts & Humanities	11+	Tenured	International
Tim Yount	Social Sciences	1-10	Pre-Tenure	Public
Yoshi Okimi	Social Sciences	1-10	Pre-Tenure	International

### **Data Collection**

The hallmark of case study research is rich description with the ability to “transport the reader” to the setting or into the case (Merriam, 2009). The strength of case study research is the ability to holistically investigate an issue and thus present the multiple views and realities of the phenomenon (Stake, 1995). As such, it was important to collect detailed data to provide the thorough and vivid descriptions to provide a “vicarious experience” for the reader (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). Collecting detailed data was also necessary to convey understanding and for the reader to assess the evidence upon which the case analysis was built (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (1998) characterizes data collection in a case study as a “recursive, interactive process” in which engaging in one strategy incorporates or may lead to subsequent sources of data (p. 134). Creswell (2003) notes, “Case study involves a wide array of procedures as the research builds an in-depth picture of the case” (p. 132). Documents, observations and interviews allowed for the holistic, intense and total understanding of the case. A matrix

of the information collected is presented in Table 5 on the following page to illustrate the depth and multiple forms of data used in the current study.

**Table 5**

**Data Collection Matrix**

<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Number of Departments</b>	<b>High/Low Pell Eligible</b>	<b>Department Observations</b>	<b>Participant Interviews</b>
Agricultural Life Sciences	3	High	1	7
Arts & Humanities	2	High	2	7
Business	2	Low	0	2
Physical Sciences	3	Low	0*	8
Social Sciences	2	High	2	7

*\*I was invited to one department's meeting, but the observation could not take place until the spring term which was outside the data collection timeframe for the study.*

### **Documents**

The term “documents” is used as an umbrella term to refer to sources of data other than interviews or observations (Merriam, 2009). It includes sources of data in existence prior to the research at hand such as official records, government documents, letters or journals, photographs, videos, or other accounts (Merriam, 2009). In the current study, several forms of documents were used to inform the case analysis. The collection of documents was guided by “questions, educated hunches and emerging findings” which meant that as the researcher I was open to new insights and sensitive to the data (Merriam, 2009). Tracking down leads in this manner made it possible to make “serendipitous discoveries” or to uncover valuable data “accidentally” (Merriam, 2009, p. 150).

Institutional data sets and researcher field notes were used. The other documents collected emerged as I began the research. Faculty members' syllabi for courses taught was used to learn more about how the faculty member approached student interactions and communicated expectations. For example, late and attendance policies provided some insight into the flexibility and information that was made explicitly known to students. Merriam (2009) noted, documents are "a product of the context in which they were produced and therefore grounded in the real world" (p. 156).

Authenticity and accuracy of the documents was confirmed by participants or institutional offices. The information from documents was analyzed and used as part of the process of inductively building categories and theoretical constructs in the case (Merriam, 2009).

### **Observations**

Observations take place in the settings where the phenomena naturally occurs (Creswell, 2007). It offers a firsthand account of the situation and adds to the holistic interpretation of the phenomena (Merriam, 2009). Stake (1995) notes, that observations are used to "fashion a story or unique description of the case" by observing "episodes of unique relationships" (p. 63). Observations also provide knowledge of the context and other reference points which can be further explored (Merriam, 2009).

I secured access to five faculty meetings including one curriculum committee, one executive committee, and three department meetings. I contacted the chair of the meetings/committees to request permission to observe and provided detailed information about the study and my role as observer. Upon confirmation of the meeting time, I provided the chair with a brief bio in order for him or her to introduce me at the beginning of the meeting. Some faculty asked follow-up questions after the introduction, but most often the meeting continued in a business-as-usual manner. The length of the observations varied from 60 minutes to 180 minutes. This size of the meetings ranged from six faculty members to over thirty-five. While some meetings included graduate students and staff members, others were closed meetings and the allowance of a guest, like me, was a rare occurrence.

In each observation, I assumed the position of observer as participant where my activity was known to the group and participation in the group was secondary to the role of information gatherer (Merriam, 2009). I recorded field notes, noting general topics and how they were discussed within the department; I did not record the discussion verbatim.

### **Interviews**

Interviews in qualitative research are often viewed as a conversation with a purpose (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995) where knowledge evolves through dialogue (Kvale, 1996). Patton (2002) emphasizes that interviewing is used to gain entry into



another individual's perspective, to find out what is "in and on someone else's mind" (p. 341). In case study research, interviewing is very important because the case will not be viewed by everyone in the same way; interviewing is the "main road to multiple realities" (Stake, 1995, p. 64). A postmodern frame emphasizes the constructive nature of knowledge (Kvale, 1996) and was especially relevant during the interviews. I conducted the interviews from a postmodern stance where there was no aim in unearthing a single perception of self, understanding that there are "various non-unitary performances of selves" (Merriam, 2009, p. 92). Additionally, aligned with the postmodern perspective, I viewed the interview as a conversation in which the data arose in an "interpersonal relationship, coauthored and coproduced by interviewer and interviewee" (Kvale, 1996, p. 159). The in-depth interviews with faculty were instrumental in understanding the issues.

I opted for the most frequently used approach to interviewing in qualitative studies, semi-structured. A semi-structured interview means that the topics and questions were guided by a pre-determined protocol of open-ended questions and probes (Appendix F), targeting certain issues under investigation. However, the exact wording and ordering of questions was flexible and not predetermined (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). This format assumes that the interviewee defines the world in unique ways and allows for flexibility and emergent questions during the interview (Merriam, 2009). Most important, it allows for the exploration of new ideas and topics, often

based upon the data analysis of prior interviews (Merriam, 2009). These approaches are true to the emerging format of qualitative research. Each practice fosters a conversational tone and relaxed environment (Patton, 2002) and requires that the interviewer be prepared and able to think quickly to avoid the pitfalls of interviewing, such as asking leading questions (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Finally, Merriam (2009) suggests establishing rapport early in the interview but assuming neutrality with regard to the respondent's knowledge. "Rapport is a stance vis-à-vis the person being interviewed. Neutrality is a stance vis-à-vis the content of what that person says," (Patton, 2002, p. 365). In other words, an interviewer being respectful, nonjudgmental and sensitive to the respondent and topic is critical to the success of interviews (Merriam, 2009). Neutrality and establishing rapport was especially important provided my role as a researcher described above.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant over a six month period during the summer and fall of 2012. The interviews were audio recorded and I also made field notes. After my initial review and reflection, I saved the file electronically with the assigned pseudonym. I then sent the audio file for transcription. A transcriber transcribed the interviews verbatim. Upon receipt of the transcription, I reviewed the document while listening to the audio file to make any additional notes or corrections. Interviews were 60-120 minutes in length and only one interview was conducted per participant. However, participants were invited to provide comments on

drafts of the thematic analysis, allowing them to expand upon topics or suggest alterations. This activity is further described in the discussion of data validation techniques. Transcripts were not sent to participants and no participant requested his or her transcript.

The pilot study conducted in the spring of 2011 and further described below was especially helpful in constructing the protocol used for this study. As Creswell (2007) suggests, questions were based upon the central phenomenon under investigation and the sub research questions of the study. Additionally, probes were used to add depth and breadth to the data collected and to steer the interview back to the topic at hand when needed (Creswell, 2007). The theoretical frameworks were especially important in shaping the protocol and ensuring that the full scope of the access puzzle was addressed. As St. John et al. (2011) noted, access is a complex phenomenon and testing and building new theory for improving postsecondary opportunity is significantly important on many levels. Their theory, academic capital formation strived to provide a frame for conducting research across disciplinary boundaries, while providing new approaches to study critical social problems such as academic preparation and educational attainment (St. John et al., 2010). Specifically, a neutral, descriptive question was used as the introductory question to set the tone of the interview and to establish rapport (Merriam, 2009). Additional lead questions were created using strategies such as devil's advocate, hypothetical, ideal position, and interpretive

(Merriam, 2009). These addressed participants' perspectives, choices, opinions, knowledge, and experiences. The protocol continued to evolve during the data collection process (Merriam, 2009).

### **Data Analysis**

Although addressed in separate sections, data collection and analysis was a simultaneous activity, an interactive process that allowed for the production of believable and trustworthy findings (Merriam, 1998). Moreover, without ongoing data analysis, Merriam (2009) warns that the data can become "unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming" (p. 171). Thus, data analysis began with the first pieces of data collected and morphed and intensified as more data was collected.

Stake (1995) characterizes data analysis in case studies as an art, an intuitive process to search for meaning. Stake described data analysis as the process of taking something apart and making sense of it all during interpretation, with the caveat that the something is what the researcher is interested in (Stake, 1995). In contrast to the simplicity of Stake's interpretation, Merriam (1998) provides a more specified description, data analysis is "a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation...it involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read" (p. 178). It begins with identifying segments in the data set that are responsive to the

research and sub research questions, comparing units of data with the next, assigning codes or categories, sorting and grouping (and re-grouping) data segments, synthesizing, grouping and naming the categories or themes (Merriam, 2009). As a result, the findings are organized descriptive accounts, themes, or categories the cut across the data (Merriam, 2009). The steps are the process of taking data apart and putting it back together, but as the heart of qualitative data analysis, the steps must be described thoroughly to “persuade the reader of the authenticity of the findings” (Merriam, 1998, p. 152). Clear data analysis strategies also help to guide the researcher in narrowing the study and deciding when to cease data collection (Merriam, 1998).

In this case study, Glaser and Strauss’s constant comparative method was utilized as a method of managing the large volume of data collected (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Although the method is often associated with the tradition of grounded theory, Merriam states that the constant comparative method is widely used in qualitative research (2009) and Gardner often employs the method in her case study research (2007, 2009). In the constant comparative analysis, many of the same steps cited above are followed. Data segments are grouped together on similar dimensions and are tentative until they become a category from ongoing data analysis (Merriam, 2009). The overall goal is to identify patterns and arrange the categories in relation to other categories (Merriam, 2009). To do this, several tools such as Microsoft Word and a

researcher notebook, were used to facilitate the analysis, sorting and retrieving of data segments. The analysis process for interview transcripts was as follows:

1. *Preparing and organizing the data.* I maintained a research notebook of handwritten notes and observations made during the interview. At the conclusion of each interview, I spent time reflecting on the big ideas or lessons learned from the interview. I recorded these notions in my research notebook and sometimes these ideas served to extend the interview protocol for the next interview. Once I received the transcribed interview, I read through the interview transcripts while listening to the audio file to verify accuracy of the transcription. At the beginning of each transcript, I typed an interview summary, based upon my field notes and made additional comments when needed. All participant identifiers were removed from the transcript at this step. Finally, I saved the updated file with the word “cleaned” and used this file for the remainder of the study.
2. *Review data.* I read through each document, field note, and interview transcript one “chunk” at a time, becoming intimately familiar with the data (Winkle-Wagner, 2011).
3. *Development of raw codes.* Meaningful segments of data were identified (Merriam, 2009) and two to three word codes were recorded in a Word document alongside the associated “chunk.” This step could be defined

as coding “close to the ground” and I favored in vivo codes, or the words of participants (Creswell, 2007; Stake 1995). In Word, I added field notes or comments to those segments of text that I wanted to flag and to think more about during later steps in the process.

4. *Reduction*. Continuing to use Word and my research notebook, I reviewed the raw codes for their importance to the phenomena and edited the codes several times as I worked with the data. I began to identify patterns and regularities in the data (Creswell, 2007) which I noted in my research notebook. True to the constant comparative method, I reflected and wrote about these patterns, keeping in mind past incidents while searching for new (Glaser, 1978). I synthesized the information learned from my observations, documents, and field notes.
5. *Further Reduction*. To further reduce the data, I employed a method in which the researcher asks an analytic question of the data (Neumann, 2009). Based on the early codes, I asked the question: what does a faculty member say about access? From this question, I began to narrow the patterns and select the data that was most meaningful to the study at hand. These patterns helped to develop the categories created in the following step.

6. *Compile the codes into categories.* I began to visualize the codes and cluster like codes into categories that “covered” or spanned many individual segments of data; the categories were abstractions derived from the data and not the data themselves (Merriam, 2009). In other words, I employed categorical aggregation (Creswell, 2007) when looking for patterns of “correspondence” in the data (Stake, 1995). I performed part of this step in my research notebook before creating a skeleton of an analysis outline in Word. I then returned to my in vivo code document to employ “lean coding” (Creswell, 2007) techniques to the transcripts, reading them thoroughly once more. I modified codes and categories using the segments of text flagged during in vivo coding and continued to shape the analysis outline.
7. *Theme development.* I compiled the categories into larger themes, linking the categories together in meaningful ways (Merriam, 2009). The theoretical framework used to guide the study was especially relevant at this stage in the data analysis where the analytic frameworks could assist in the conceptual relationships of the categories (Creswell, 2007). I used the analysis outline to group codes/categories into the various thematic groupings. I discovered relationships among the categories (Glaser, 1978) and discussed these with a peer reviewer to establish validity.



8. *Validation of themes.* I organized the segments of text by theme in a Word document and comprehensively reviewed the sections of text within each theme for continuity. I often referred to original transcripts or documents and made any changes that were needed. This strategy was used to make final assignments of text sections to theme. At this stage, a peer reviewer analyzed select transcripts and codes for additional theme validation. This feedback and recursive process helped to solidify the themes prior to composing the narrative description.
9. *Compose narrative descriptions and assertions.* Naturalistic descriptions and generalizations were developed, analyzing and synthesizing case details including multiple perspectives and data sources (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). Participants were sent drafts of the narrative descriptions for comment and correction. The feedback that was received was taken into account and incorporated into the narrative descriptions. This is further described below.
10. *Application of theory and the literature.* Finally, I returned to the literature to compare and contrast and enhance the findings in the final review of the assertions (Creswell, 2007). Additional literature was referenced in thematic areas where a priori knowledge was not considered or fully analyzed.

The steps outlined above allowed for themes to emerge from the data and provided a means for compressing large amounts of data into meaningful units for analysis. Throughout analysis Harry Wolcott's mantra of "constant winnowing" of the data was especially important because of the large volume of data. Applying the technique of asking an analytical question (Neumann, 2009) was especially important in reducing the data and creating a narrative that was appropriate for this study. It was also imperative to remember the importance of both the narrative description and assertions that are central to case study research. As Stake (1995) notes, narrative descriptions and "naturalistic generalizations" (or assertions) allow readers to work with existing propositional knowledge and to modify their existing generalizations. With this goal in mind and through the constant comparative method, the steps of data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously until categories were saturated and writing began (Glaser, 1978). In many ways, data validation is an extension of analysis and therefore Steps eight through ten are included in this section. However, the validation techniques used are further detailed in the subsequent paragraphs following a brief overview of the pilot study that shaped this study.

### **Pilot Study**

I conducted a pilot study in spring 2011 which significantly shaped the current study. The pilot study focused on administrator and faculty perspectives of assumptions related to higher education and included four participants. The focus of the pilot study

was closely related to the current study, but from a slightly different angle.

Foundationally, the study explored issues of access from the perspective of faculty and administrators but as related to the institution. The guiding research question was: How do today's competing demands and a foundational commitment to access coexist, from the perspective of faculty and administrators at a Midwest land-grant institution? In addition four sub-questions were used. They included: 1) what are faculty/administrators' perceptions of the competing demands facing their institution of higher education? 2) How is a commitment to access promoted, according to faculty/administrators? 3) Are competing demands and a commitment to access in conflict? If so, how do faculty and administrators see this manifesting in their institution? 4) What role does history and mission play within the land-grant institution?

I defined competing demands as external pressures in contention for human and financial resources. For example, this included consequences of reduced state budgets, calls for accountability and greater efficiency from governing boards, and government regulations and policies.

These same issues are a part of the current study but I expanded this notion to include public policy and the political ideology surrounding public policy. In addition, I reframed these issues as a lens in which explore faculty perceptions of access as seen in the use of two theories, academic capitalism and the two-good framework. To define a commitment to access, I used original language from the mission of land-grant

institutions which includes “a broad segment of the population” with access to education (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, n.d.). Similar to the concept of competing demands, an institutional commitment to access was still important and was reflected in the current study, but the institutional commitment to access no longer served as the unit of analysis. In other words, in the pilot study the institution was the unit of analysis and in the current study, tenured and tenure-track faculty serve as the unit of analysis. Yet, the institution remains significant in the study because it is impossible to separate the phenomenon’s variables from context (Merriam, 2009).

Regardless of this shift in focus, I utilized a similar methodological approach to conduct the pilot study as is described in the current study. The pilot study was a qualitative case study of a land-grant institution’s balancing act of competing demands and a commitment to access as portrayed by faculty and administrator perspectives. Institutional documentation was used to support the case. The case was bounded by a single institution, participants including faculty and administrators, and time which was the semester prior to the institution joining a new academic and athletic affiliation. The university held several preparation sessions for faculty and staff about joining the new prestigious affiliations and potential for new strategic partnerships. An increased expectation for the campus was a repetitive message in research expenditures, faculty awards and other areas. This aspect was important in establishing an instrumental case

with unique characteristics in which to explore the coexistence of competing demands and a commitment to access.

As expected in a pilot study, data collection was much smaller in scope and included only four open-ended interviews. Each interview lasted 60-90 minutes in duration, was audio-recorded with the participant's permission and I transcribed them verbatim. Using Maxqda, I applied in vivo coding techniques resulting in over 300 codes. Then I used categorical aggregation techniques to categorize and group the codes, looking for patterns and correspondence in the data and lean coding to recode some of the original codes assigned (Creswell, 2007). I added in observation notes and document analysis and applied the same coding strategy. In my first draft of the findings, I reported that five themes emerged. Upon peer review, I was encouraged to reanalyze the data with the notion of academic capitalism versus the public good mission in mind. From this reanalysis, I reduced the five themes to four and repositioned one. A brief summary of the pilot study's findings follows.

The findings indicated that a commitment to access was important and the public good mission clearly existed at the institution. It was also evident that faculty and administrators viewed today's challenges as different from those in the past and acknowledged that the institution was facing tough decisions. Many of these challenges were reflective of today's market conditions and the pressures to generate revenue or cut expenses which reflected academic capitalism. Yet, academic capitalist ideas were

not the overarching findings. Instead most findings, even those that were related to an academic capitalist way of thinking, were framed within the public good mission. While it appears that the public good mission remained intact, there were substantial concerns about what the institution was responsible for, including the role of financial aid; who had access to the public good; and what the future held for the university. These major subthemes emerged and each related back to the larger assumption of the public good mission.

Based on the literature, I expected several issues to emerge such as concerns about tuition pricing and state appropriations, but these were not as frequently discussed as expected. Instead, several issues were passionately described that I had not expected such as frustration with high school counselors, the Dream Act, standardized tests and an overall connection to race and class. For instance, a faculty member shared a story with me regarding a high school counselor confronted about tracking Latinos into skills courses. Based on an assumption that the students were undocumented and therefore couldn't go to college, the counselor had tracked them into skills courses versus college prep courses. He stated his frustration, "There isn't encouragement of our Latinos in Nebraska to go onto higher education and there is discouragement from it. If counselors are telling students to not take certain courses, even if they decide to go to college, they aren't qualified." Findings such as this inspired the current study and in-depth exploration of the faculty perspective of access. In

shifting from the institutional approach to access, I strived to uncover a perspective of access not reflected in the literature and unaccounted for in models such as academic capital formation.

It was evident that this study was relevant and timely as documents indicated and participants sensed a shift or change in higher education. There was a heightened awareness of the public good mission and concern for it when looking forward, especially considering the current challenges facing higher education and the institution. Several participants remarked upon the conclusion of the interview that conversations like the one we had had needed to remain “front and center.” It also became apparent that the issues were multilayered, complex, and fraught with delicate relationships. Participant’s personal experiences through their own pathways of education were reflected in their comments and their interpretation of the current state of affairs. I capitalized on this outcome in the current study by moving away from the institution as the unit of analysis and instead focused on participants themselves. A few other methodological differences between the pilot study and current study are noteworthy.

There were three notable exceptions in methodology between the pilot and current study. First, a significant change involved participants of the study. In the pilot study, I conducted in-depth interviews with both tenured and tenure-track faculty members and administrators. From the findings of the pilot study, I realized that the case study was not bounded enough in part due to the selection of participants.

Administrators were exposed to issues of access and institutional will more directly and therefore their perceptions were often connected to their job responsibilities.

Administrators referenced or quoted institutional strategic plans, mission, and top-level initiatives whereas faculty discussed personal experiences and brought to light issues or concerns not referenced in public documents, such as who deserves access. For this reason, I chose to focus on faculty in the current study to illuminate a perspective not reflected in institutional documents or in the access literature. In addition, faculty members interact with students in significantly differing capacities as compared to administrators, especially senior level administrators. It was important to limit participants to faculty members in order to untangle the perceptions of access and to more accurately describe the perspective and implications for students.

Second, I added a strong theoretical framework to develop, guide and analyze the current study that was not used in the pilot study. Academic capitalism was used to inform the pilot study but I expanded my use of theory to include the two-good framework and academic capital formation and enhanced the ways in which I applied theory in the current study. This change was based on the feedback I received from external reviewers, who cited the lack of a strong theoretical framework as a weakness of the pilot study. By adding the additional theoretical frameworks, I had a shaper lens in which to develop the research questions and interview protocol and to analyze the data and findings. As a result, the findings of the current study were able to be



positioned in the broader context of inequity, class, and public policy from a social and economic viewpoint.

Finally, in the pilot study, I employed limited data validation techniques due to a short time period for completion of the study. In the current study, I expanded data validation to better substantiate the trustworthiness of the findings which were important to the extension of the conclusions from this study.

### **Trustworthiness of the Data**

“The rigor in qualitative research derives from the researcher’s presence, the nature of the interaction between researcher and participants, the triangulation of data, the interpretation of perceptions, and rich, thick description” (Merriam, 1998, p. 151). As this statement indicates, there are several components necessary for creating trustworthy findings in qualitative research. Often this is referred to as validity and reliability in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). However, Lincoln and Guba (2000) provide a more pragmatic view, looking at results as sufficiently authentic, enough that one would trust the findings to construct social policy or legislations based upon them. Simply viewed by Stake (1995), as “getting it right,” the researcher has a responsibility and obligation to assist readers in arriving at high-quality understandings.

My role in the research and epistemology were the first components of establishing trustworthy data. While they were described more fully in preceding paragraphs, several aspects are revisited and more distinctly linked to the outcome of

validity. My role as interpreter, as an agent of new interpretation, new knowledge, but also new illusion made it important to stay close to participants' words (Stake, 1995). Therefore, I used in vivo coding, verbatim words of the participants and word-based analysis to construct initial categories (Merriam, 2009). My stance that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered (Stake, 1995) helped to position my experiences and predispositions in the research and guided my interactions with participants. I fully engaged myself in the case details and strived to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomena, to uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening (Merriam, 2009). Therefore I used multiple forms of data, employed rigorous sampling techniques to ensure representation of multiple perspectives, collected data until saturation, and composed thick descriptions (Merriam, 2009).

Thick description is a term from the discipline of anthropology and means the "complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated" (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). Thick description establishes credibility between the interpretation of researcher and those being studied and allows readers to learn from the case and to interpret themes and assertions themselves (Creswell, 2007). Triangulation of multiple sources of data and perspectives also added credibility to the case analysis presented. Theme development was based on analysis of documents and field notes, observations and analysis of participant interviews. This methodological triangulation was used to

illuminate or nullify interpretations, and as is common in constructivist frames, to look for additional interpretations instead of confirmation of a single meaning or reality (Stake, 1995). Data source triangulation—observing faculty in meetings and during an interview setting—also allowed for an understanding of participants’ perspectives in relation to their surroundings (Stake, 1995).

Another strategy used to establish validity was peer review or debriefing, where another qualitative researcher provides an external check of the research process (Creswell, 2007). In this study, I employed the assistance of another advanced doctoral student who read selected data items, raw codes, categorical groupings and preliminary themes and then provided feedback and suggestions for alternative viewpoints. My doctoral committee chair was also engaged during the data analysis phase of the study and often played the role of “devil’s advocate” asking hard questions about methods, meanings and interpretations (Creswell, 2007). Finally, member checking was employed as a strategy to ensure trustworthiness of the data and findings (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). Member checking is considered to be one of the most critical techniques for establishing credibility (Creswell, 2007). I conducted member checking by distributing drafts of the theme descriptions to participants (Merriam, 2009). I asked for participants to review the material for accuracy and palatability (Stake, 1995) and to check that the interpretation “rang true” (Merriam, 2009). On faculty participant requested a face-to-face meeting to further discuss the results and

provided additional feedback regarding her views of the faculty perspectives of access. Overall, these techniques enhanced the quality of the research and ensured that the data analyses were true to participants' perspectives. They were important throughout each stage of the research process.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Throughout all phases of the research process, ethical issues are present (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) differentiates between substantial validation which was discussed above and ethical validation. Ethical validation refers to the issues of research agendas and their underlying moral assumptions, equitable treatment of diverse voices, and political and ethical implications of dissemination (Creswell, 2007). Stake (2005) observes that qualitative researchers are "guests" in otherwise private spaces in the world and that "attention to manners and adherence to ethics" is essential (p. 459). The strategy I employed was to keep participants' well-being top-of-mind throughout the entire study, from design to dissemination. The study protocol included several procedures to protect the confidentiality of participants in recruitment of participants, data collection and analyses, and in the written report. Prior to the interview, I reviewed the informed consent approved by the Institutional Review Board and stressed that participation in the study was optional. During the interview, I emphasized my role as researcher and interpreter of perspectives, that there was no "right" answer to interview questions and that the participants had an option to not

answer any of the questions asked. During analysis I employed several strategies to validate findings and assertions and allowed for all voices to be heard (Merriam, 2009).

While guidelines and procedures are available through agencies such as Institutional Review Boards, the burden to produce a study that has been conducted and disseminated in an ethical manner relies on the individual investigator (Merriam, 1998). I fulfilled this role with support and in consultation with my dissertation committee and advisor.

### **Limitations**

From the perspective of research, this study advanced the exploration of access to higher education; however, the study also had several limitations. As a single institution case, this study is limited by the perceptions of participants at one university in specific disciplines and by my evaluation of those perceptions, as a graduate student and full-time administrator. My status as a higher educational administrator may have played a conflicting role, but I employed multiple strategies to alleviate questions of coercion and to assure confidentiality. I also approached this study from the assumption that student access to higher education remains a serious problem facing society. This study was limited to participants in a handful of departments at one institution. Future research should explore comparisons at other similar and dissimilar institutions, while also exploring the intricacies of the field or discipline home of faculty. Non tenure-track

and administrator viewpoints at various institutional types also merit further investigation.

The specific nature of Midwestern University is not representative of all land-grant institutions or all research institutions and should not be generalized as such. In addition, while similarities are expected between faculties at institutions, this study recognizes the unique culture and history of each institution. Thus, the findings are conceptually transferrable (Yin, 2008) but should not be conflated to generalizations about all faculties.

The findings may be useful for advocates for access to higher education to consider and to more fully understand the access puzzle. The perspective of faculty has not been explored in recent history and yet the faculty interacts with students on a regular basis and significantly influences academic issues at colleges and universities. My intention is to provide a case analysis which will enhance the theoretical framework of academic capital formation, inform policy consideration and development, promote analysis of strategies to increase access, and encourage advocacy for those who are underrepresented in higher education including low-income, first-generation and minority students.

### **Remaining Chapters**

The findings from the current study are presented in the following chapter.

Finally, Chapter Five includes the discussion, conclusions and recommendations from the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to share the findings from this research study where a more comprehensive understanding of the access problem was sought through the investigation of the faculty's perspective of access. The study's research question is answered through the presentation of faculty perspectives and interpretations of the access puzzle. The research question guiding this study was: How do faculty members at a predominately White, Midwestern land-grant, research extensive university perceive access to higher education?

Though there were differences in participant comments, multiple aspects of the phenomena were consistent and reinforced by one another. The themes carried from one participant to another regardless of variation in academic discipline and personal experience and perspective. Personal backgrounds and the personal experiences of participants were reflected in comments and perspective. In this analysis the data were not analyzed comparing first-generation faculty to non-first-generation faculty or between those who self-identified as coming from low-income backgrounds with those from higher income families. This type of an analysis would provide additional insight and will be explored in another venue. For the purposes of this study and in this chapter, the commonalities are presented in two large-scale structures with associated themes and subthemes, a Public Good for Whom and Access for Whom.



The first section, A Public Good for Whom addresses access as it is embedded within the context of the case. In other words, issues related to mission, changes in the state's role, and public policy are revealed. In the second section, Access for Whom, the focus is on issues of access at the student level. The Access for Whom section reveals faculty preferences and bias regarding student access and success. Faculty members often described issues of access and success together when discussing students. This position is reflected in the themes and subthemes in the Access for Whom section. Summary tables are presented at the beginning of each section to support the narrative description.

### **Section One: A Public Good for Whom?**

The following findings center on the complexity of the current environment and multifaceted mission of higher education. They reflect the tension cited in the literature on academic capitalism and the two-good framework, two of the theories used to guide the study. The themes include institutional mission and responsibility to the state and the public good mission. Execution of these missions relies on the faculty's understanding and support; as a result, it becomes evident that faculty opinions and perceptions are a critical component to the issue of student access. The findings also extend to issues of student success in the narrow sense of degree attainment, which is directly linked to acquisition of academic capital and society's realization of the benefits

of providing education to a broad population. Table 6 provides a summary of the themes and subthemes presented in this section.

<i>Table 6</i>		
<b>Summary of Themes related to Mission &amp; Access – Section One: A Public Good for Whom</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Subthemes</b>
A Perceived Responsibility to the State Effects How an Institutional Mission is Fulfilled	This theme rationalizes a commitment to access through connections to institutional history and mission.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A responsibility to provide an affordable and accessible university exists.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Admissions standards reflect institutional mission.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Beliefs about the Purpose of Education Reflect a Desire to Uphold a Public Good Mission	This theme supports a commitment to access through notions of the public good mission and societal responsibilities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A movement to a credential environment challenges the public good mission.</li> </ol>

### **A Perceived Responsibility to the State Effects how an Institutional Mission is Fulfilled**

In one section of the interview protocol, I asked participants to describe what the mission of Midwestern University meant to them. While some participants easily described the mission and what the university mission meant to them, others searched for examples and for the right words to summarize what they seemed to know well, but had not considered all that much. Most participants simply referenced teaching and research and some included providing service to the state.

Still, the ambitious growth goals of the university and efforts to improve reputation and to increase research funding were often reflected in responses regarding university mission. One faculty member, Dr. Barry Green, a tenured professor in agricultural life sciences, wished that he could cite the Morrill Act language verbatim but was still able to articulate his perspective:

I'm still very much an idealist this way, but I think the mission is to educate the people of the state, almost regardless of their background and of their ability to pay, because after all we are a state institution. I wish I could quote the Morrill Act language, but I can't. I know the sense of it though. Our responsibility is to develop education for the people in the state, primarily. I know the President wouldn't like hearing that, because we're going to expand by pulling in all these people from elsewhere, maybe.

Dr. Green not only referenced the mission document, but interpreted the mission to providing access to groups of students. Dr. Green also alluded to his concern that the University hopes to increase its student body and that efforts in attracting students outside the state's borders could negatively affect the land-grant mission. Dr. Sara Alto, a tenured professor in the physical sciences, provides her perspective by directly addressing the growth initiative, "They say that we are going to increase our undergraduate population by X? Okay. Where are we going to get them from? Are we going to lower our ACT and SAT cutoff requirement?" Like her colleague, Dr. Alto has

concerns about the growth goal, but she sees growth as a threat to institution's academic standards. Without directly discussing the mission, Dr. Alto's view is as equally tied to mission as Dr. Green's. It reflects a perspective related to access and who this faculty member believes should be admitted into the university.

Dr. Dag Aguilar, associate professor in physical sciences, described a different concern about the goals of expansion, recognizing the ulterior motive of increasing revenue. Dr. Aguilar believes that by admitting large numbers of international students and increasing revenue, there will be a negative effect on other students' access and their classroom experience. He stated:

We're relying on kind of getting foreign students and people who pay more money to be able to fund the university...It's kind of like a cash cow that becomes tempting to milk. But I think if there's too much of that, it degrades the experience. We need to continue to keep our universities very open.

Dr. Aguilar pointed to a university focus on revenues and recruiting international students as a potential problem to other students' access and success. While Dr. Aguilar supports an open university with students from many backgrounds, including international students, he prioritizes the institutional mission to serve domestic students. Dr. Aguilar expressed an interest in having a diverse student body, but interprets the mission as primarily serving domestic students and their needs.

Dr. Kami Kelly, a female tenured faculty member in the arts and humanities provides an alternative view to the goals and how faculty might respond, especially those in her department:

I think we've all lived in our ivory tower here plenty. But then now when it comes to recruiting issues and we see our numbers down this year, it's making everybody a little bit panicky. Like, oh, maybe we need to do these things. When for years is was like oh, we don't need to do anything. That attitude has changed.

Dr. Kelly does not directly reference mission, but she begins to provide a perspective on the faculty role in implementing mission, engaging with and recruiting students. Dr. Kelly acknowledges that the reactive or aloof posture among faculty in her department is changing. This is not surprising given the increased competition among universities for students and the increased dependence on student tuition revenue. Dr. Kelly's point is also significant because although it might be administrator's purview to suggest and lead initiatives, faculty involvement is critical to success. Faculty influence decisions related to academic standards, determine for themselves when and how to interact with students, and, thus, overall affect how the mission is implemented. Many of these activities result in outcomes related to who is granted and denied access to the institution.

How the administration chooses to carry out a multifaceted mission and pursuit of ambitious goals affects faculty employment and in turn how the faculty interacts with

students. Dr. Niles Boyd, a pre-tenured faculty member in business reveals his experience with the tension of the institution's goal to increase its reputational standing and external research funding while being true to spirit of its teaching mission. Dr. Boyd states:

There's a little bit of an issue with providing rewards and penalties to get people to perform better...We're not saying, you're doing a really fantastic job teaching, so we're going to give you the opportunity of teaching more classes, rewarding it. It's more like, your research is not up to par. If you don't start publishing a lot more, we're going to have you teach more. It's sort of making you teach more as a penalty—not because you're a good teacher, but because you're not such a good researcher. If these people are great teachers, then that's fine. But they might be equally bad or worse teachers, in which case you're not improving undergraduate education.

Dr. Boyd's perspective uncovers the underbelly of administrative decisions that institutions make in order to meet their goals and the potential outcome of creating a contentious environment. If faculty members view research as the means to be rewarded, it could influence their opinions on the student characteristics that they value in higher education to include those who are most prepared to help them carry out research. This view could eventually translate into admissions practices. A research

priority at the cost to teaching could also influence how much time faculty members are willing to spend engaging with students and providing opportunities for their success.

Finally, Dr. Boyd provides insight into the reality of faculty life and the challenges of balancing the institutional missions of producing good research and providing quality advising and education. The tension among numerous priorities could threaten the mission, especially an access mission, without advocacy from administrators.

For those who referenced Midwestern University's responsibility to the state, faculty rationalized the commitment on the basis of a variety of factors. Several cited MU as the state's only doctoral granting institution, a land-grant institution, the state's largest public institution or flagship campus. Others stated that Midwestern was a public institution funded by taxpayers and this seemed to justify the need to provide service to the state. Dr. Kami Kelly, again comments on her understanding of the mission and this important role:

Our department has always reminded ourselves of the land-grant mission, you know, that we owe something to the state for the benefits that the state has given us to make this institution, to have the facilities, and the means, and the ground—literally the ground we're standing on is something that was gifted to make this happen for the state. And as a native of this state, I've been very determined to be contributing to this mission of education and enlightenment.

Dr. Kelly's statement suggests that the notion of service to the state is embedded in department culture and embodied by the faculty. There is a sentiment of gratitude and pride regarding the institution's land-grant status and mission.

Dr. Bob Samuels, a tenured professor in agricultural life sciences believes that the faculty in agriculturally-related departments "carry more of the weight" of the land-grant mission. He does not indicate that he thinks this is a bad thing, but that it is the reality of the campus. "I'm not gonna say [there's] more of a commitment, but a recognized responsibility that service is part of what we do...service is recognized as a requirement of our jobs here [in the college]." Although Dr. Samuels' view is less idealistic than Dr. Kelly's, his perspective points to the reality that there is a day-to-day responsibility for carrying out the land-grant mission and providing service to the state. Often faculty in the agricultural life sciences cited their work across the state in extension and outreach and talked passionately about this work. They embodied a commitment to working with the rural parts of the state through their roles of teaching, research and service and emphasized the importance of serving the state and upholding the values of the land-grant mission. Faculty directly addressed issues of access and affordability in their discussions of institutional mission.

**A responsibility to provide an affordable and accessible university exists.**

Although there were some faculty members who viewed the land-grant mission narrowly and as only related to agriculturally-related programs, still others connected



the concept of service to the state to issues of affordability and accessibility for students and their families from both urban and rural backgrounds. Again, Dr. Niles Boyd, a pre-tenured faculty member in business states:

We're a land-grant university, and a flagship school, and really the major university in a small state, so I think Midwestern would be expected to be different compared to the private school, and different from maybe a school that had a number of major state universities [in one state]. I think what they've done, keeping tuition pretty modest compared to private school tuition or schools that have a lot of other universities makes sense. And I think having high standards is good, but also having standards in a university that is accessible to a large swath of students that would potentially be going to college from inside the state is a good thing.

Dr. Boyd acknowledges that MU's role in the state is shaped by many factors, such as being the major institution in a small state. He also reveals that while having high standards is good, there is a reality about what is possible given factors such as, mission and role of the institution.

The reality is similarly true for the tenuous decisions regarding tuition and fees. In other words, while the university is relying more heavily on tuition revenue and increasing tuition and fees might be an option, there is the reality of what students and their families in the state can afford. Dr. Green is suspicious of the university's claims

that it is affordable and points to problematic peer comparisons as creating a false interpretation of affordability:

We, the university, need to be very careful, more careful than we have been, to be mindful of costs and the effect that this has on our student clientele and the people in the state...and I don't care that we're the most cost efficient school in the Athletic Six. Everybody's comparing us to the A6. If we are not cost efficient relative to our clientele's ability to pay, then we need to seriously consider what it is that we're doing.

Dr. Green is especially concerned about families who are "land and facilities rich, but cash poor," those students from rural backgrounds. His perspective substantiates the important aspect that affordability and accessibility is relative and he suggests that affordability and accessibility means something different to different groups of people.

Dr. Green begins to delve into a contentious question of which groups deserve access to the institution, but stops short of answering this question.

Dr. Ingrid Velez, a pre-tenured faculty member in the arts and humanities, admits that the reality of meeting an access mission is complicated, "We have a responsibility to guarantee access and then success. Now it's a very complicated thing. What does it mean access? It doesn't just mean whoever wants to come can come, right? Access, sadly is more complicated." Dr. Velez encapsulates the essence of the issue surrounding access that Dr. Green alluded to in his statement above. She

understands that an access mission does not mean open access in the purest sense. Regardless, Dr. Velez believes that the institution is meeting its mission in the current environment. She acknowledges the tension in fulfilling multiple institutional roles, but believes that service to the state is the priority:

It's not only a public university, it's still, for the time being, and I hope for a long time, an accessible and affordable public university...It's a research university, an Athletic Six university, but foremost, a university for citizens of the state. And I really, really like that.

Like many of the faculty who participated in the study, Dr. Velez believed that the institution was fulfilling its responsibilities to the state and for the most part, meeting its mission. This was the general sentiment among participants. She was also cautiously optimistic about the future and expressed how important the mission and roles of the institution were to her. Dr. Velez's statement further supports the notion of the faculty role in institutional matters and those that ultimately influence issues relevant to student access.

***Admissions standards reflect institutional mission.***

Admissions standards are widely-known as an important component to the access puzzle. Yet, they also provide evidence of how an institution fulfills its responsibilities and meets stated missions. Entry requirements are academic in nature, relying on a college preparatory curriculum, standardized test score and grade point

average in order to secure admission. It is expected that selection criterion also reflects the values and preferences of the faculty since they are responsible for working with students once they arrive on campus. A responsibility to provide an accessible education for the state's citizens is directly connected to admissions standards.

As stated earlier, faculty from agricultural life sciences held distinct opinions about the rural parts of the state and often viewed themselves as advocates for students and families from this part of the state. One tenured faculty member in agricultural life sciences, Dr. Penny Shanks recalled a time when the college of agriculture considered going against administrators' decisions on implementing admissions standards for fear of denying access to students from rural parts of the state. Dr. Shanks discussed the contention among her colleagues when new standards were introduced and how they finally reached a compromise by allowing students to take certain remedial math courses for credit in their major. Dr. Shanks' account pointed to the role of faculty in accepting the administration's plans and importance of the faculty's opinion. Her view indicates the tension faculty view between maintaining an open and accessible university, true to the spirit of the land-grant mission, while advancing a goal of excellence. In later sections faculty members reveal the pitfalls of relying on grades and test scores to judge students' academic ability, however a student's academic ability is assessed and access to the university is determined at the time of admission.

Dr. Saul Peterman, assistant professor in social sciences, discussed the results of these admissions decisions and called academically underprepared students an “unfortunate circumstance” of a large, public university:

We’re a state school with a large range of students. A lot of students get in from within the state with relatively low GPAs or not always the greatest test scores...I think that’s the unfortunate circumstance of a large state university. You have a wide range of students you’re willing to admit, which I think is great...Some can excel. Some definitely do excel, but some of them never find their way, unfortunately.

Dr. Peterman references the admissions standards for in-state students and while he agrees with providing access to a wide range of students, he acknowledges that some students will never succeed. He attributes the probability of not succeeding to poor academic preparation and the low benchmarks of admissions standards. The admission standards reflect the mission of a large, state school. As faculty member at the institution, Dr. Peterman does not seem to feel empowered to do anything about the “unfortunate circumstance” and complacent to the outcome.

Dr. Emily Eby, also an assistant professor in the social sciences, related the admissions standards to the university mission, specifically the land-grant mission, “We’re a land-grant institution. Making sure that we’re serving all of the state, that we’re being inclusive, that we’re serving all students is incredibly important. Well, all

students that meet the entry requirements.” Dr. Eby’s reference to the admissions standards was more of an afterthought compared to the importance she expressed regarding how the university fulfilled their land-grant mission. Yet, Dr. Eby understood that admissions standards are a caveat in an institution’s ability to meet a truly open access mission. Like Dr. Peterman, Dr. Eby was matter-of-fact in her statement and accepted the admissions standards for what they were. Admissions standards determine who receives access to institutions, regardless of intent or mission. These pre-tenured faculty members assumed that the admissions standards reflected the institutional mission.

Dr. Cody Morgan, assistant professor in physical sciences, alluded to different expectations for in-state and out-of-state students:

The mission of the university is to help the state. The main way [of doing that] is probably by educating people. I think one other way is that not only educating people from the state, but if we can get smart people from out of state to come here, then maybe they will stay and contribute.

Because of the institutional mission, Dr. Morgan seems satisfied with accepting a wide range of in-state students. However, he quantifies expectations for out-of-state students to be “smart.” Even though the admissions standards are the same for students, regardless of residency, Dr. Morgan’s view indicates that faculty expectations may differ for subsets of students. Interestingly, his expectation is tied to institutional

mission in that he hopes “smart” non-resident students that the University attracts will stay and contribute to the state economy after graduation.

Dr. Shawna Alkhatib, professor in physical sciences, was more specific about her view of who deserved access based upon admissions criteria and academic ability and how that relates to the public mission:

I think the university is doing the right thing. I really believe that we should not lower our standards. In fact, if anything we should up the standards. This means fewer kids will go to math, science, engineering, but that’s okay. The ones that will come will actually be the best and the brightest because that’s what we want. We are a public university. Our goal is to teach the entire state, but that doesn’t mean a person who has a 2.0 GPA who cannot be a good scientist. He or she cannot be a good doctor. He or she cannot be a good English major, period. It doesn’t really matter.

It is evident from Dr. Alkhatib’s perspective that she has little interest in expanding access or providing opportunities to students lacking certain academic abilities and her view is rooted in strong beliefs about disciplines. She fundamentally believes that students with a low GPA do not belong at the university, regardless of institutional mission. She views service to the state while remaining excellent a top priority that ultimately influences how the institutional mission of access is carried out. Dr. Alkhatib

also references a desire on the part of the faculty to work with the “best and brightest” which further accentuates the significant role faculty play in access issues.

Instead of GPA, Dr. Mona Vice, a tenured faculty member in social sciences, discussed assumptions and uses of standardized test scores. First she acknowledged the problems with test scores and the importance of other student attributes, “I don’t think test scores are a good indication of people who are going to be really successful. You have to be smart enough, but beyond that, you have to be motivated.” Dr. Vice does not specify what she considered “smart enough” but indicated an acceptance of relying on standardized test scores to determine admission, “We’ve never looked at the bottom end because we accept undergraduates based on test scores that fall in a band. We never see the people that are at the other end. We can only anticipate maybe that they wouldn’t have been as successful.” However, she emphasized, “You don’t have to be at the top end of that band necessarily to be highly successful.”

Dr. Vice confirms the belief that students fall into a distribution that assumes likelihood for success based on standardized test scores. University admissions standards are built on the position that students from lower bands will not be successful. Dr. Vice also indicates that students in certain bands are never considered at the time of admission. She thinks some students are denied access based upon the single measure of standardized test score. Given the importance faculty assigns to the other factors of student success, the sole source of GPA or standardized test score is



problematic. The reliance on academic markers reflects long-held notions about the importance and value of these indices. They are built upon assumptions that ultimately reflect institutional mission and values.

Alternatively, there were faculty members like Dr. Regi Schmidt, professor in agricultural life sciences, who embraced the diversity of students at MU. Dr. Schmidt expressed concern about the university's goals and viewed academic ability as only one aspect of how to determine a student's success:

I appreciate that the university wants to attract the brightest students. I'm not contradicting that, but this idea that freshmen ACT scores have gone up doesn't excite me that much. I think that there are a whole lot of B and C students that are going to be very productive and good citizens and have tremendous accomplishments. I don't care whether they were an A student. Now if they want to go to graduate school, that's different. But not all of them are going or are destined for that. I think that we've got to make our students develop to their fullest potential, and frankly some of them are not going to be great students, and that's okay. It doesn't make them not bright. It just makes them not the best student.

Dr. Schmidt's view indicates that he expects to work with a wide range of students and sees potential in students from varied academic backgrounds. He did not address admission standards specifically, but expressed frustration at the university focus on the

“brightest” students. His goal and view of producing “good citizens” is reflective of the university state and land-grant mission, as well as the public good mission. Although Dr. Schmidt acknowledged that some students may not have an opportunity to attend graduate school based on grades, he remained focused on the opportunity and access to the bachelor’s degree.

There was little consensus on the merits of admissions standards, yet many faculty assumed that they represented the mission and institutional goals. There were many assumptions underlying the reliance of certain criterion and an expectation that these were connected to faculty expectations of students.

Faculty perceptions of institutional mission reflected a responsibility to serve the state and educate its citizens coupled with ownership to uphold the values of the institution and spirit of the land-grant mission. Maintaining an affordable and accessible university was often referenced in discussions regarding mission and indicated a fundamental belief in fulfilling responsibilities dating back over 150 years. However, how the university and faculty carried out the mission and fulfilled responsibilities was less specific and more contentious. The next theme further explores faculty beliefs related to mission.

## **Beliefs about the Purpose of Education Reflect a Desire to Uphold a Public Good**

### **Mission**

During the interviews participants also discussed the purpose of education and the post-secondary education system in general. This section provides insight into how faculty members at Midwestern view the role of higher education in society. Although these perspectives are less likely to be directly tied to Midwestern University, they provide an element of understanding to how faculty members at MU conceive issues of access.

Dr. Heather Makey, a tenured social sciences faculty member states, “All educators are in the process of helping to grow generations and I look at that as the most important thing that can be done in human endeavor.” The concept of growing future generations and contributing to the larger purpose of society indicates a view of education as a public good. Dr. Hank Jensen, a tenured faculty member in the physical sciences echoes Dr. Makey’s view, but from a natural science view. He also relates the mission and his personal experience with the responsibility to train the next generation:

We’re a research university. Myself and all of the faculty who were hired, our primary responsibility is research, right. That’s an aspect of who we are, what our career is, you know, pursuing science...But there’s also the larger vision that we need to generate, and train, and promote the next generation of scientists. That’s how we got here. And so how do you train scientists? By letting them be

scientists. By letting them come in. We all accept that as a serious responsibility, training the next scientist. You want to do it on all levels.

Dr. Jensen specifies several aspects of the public good mission of postsecondary education including the pursuit of science and training future generations. Dr. Jensen's reference to the pursuit of science could broadly be interpreted as the pursuit of knowledge and becomes meaningful for faculty across all disciplines. He also quickly acknowledges that the larger piece of the research mission is generating, promoting and training the next generation. This view expands upon Dr. Makey's and suggests a very active role of the faculty in contributing to this aspect of the public good mission. Dr. Jensen refers to "doing it on all levels," in which he means training a range of students from freshmen to doctoral students and allowing access to research labs for all levels of students. This is an inclusive view that recognizes the importance of providing opportunities. Dr. Jensen implies that today's faculty members who are now responsible for training future generations were once given a chance by someone in their past. Giving back to future generations is a fundamental ideal of the public good mission and is important when considering the faculty's role in determining who is granted entry into the university, majors and programs, research labs or other opportunities that affect student success.

Dr. Makey felt very strongly about the role of education and further articulates a social sciences perspective:

Developing a new technology that helps get us to the moon or whatever is important...but it's developing people who reflect on that technology, who think about the literature, who produce the artistic work, who analyze are we a good society? Are we the good life and who has the good life? How does that good life operate for different groups of people? That is what we contribute. To me that is the most important compliment of higher education.

This comment connects the idealistic view of the public good with the reality. In other words, although Dr. Makey views education as a public good, the reality is that some groups of people are denied access to the "good life" while others are permitted access. This view also suggests that higher education plays a role in social reproduction and transformation. Furthermore, Dr. Makey operationalizes the public good mission to include the students that universities produce, those who have the ability to contribute to society due to their postsecondary education. This perspective is critical when considering that students first have to gain access to the institution, succeed in the classroom, and graduate before being able to give back to society. Dr. Makey's view suggests that the students, or types of students, who are admitted, given opportunities to succeed, and who end up graduating determine how institutions meet their public good mission. Thus, decisions that might seem insignificant on the part of the institution or individual faculty member could have long-lasting impact.

The public good mission also became evident when participants discussed why students should pursue post-secondary education. Dr. Yoshi Okimi, another social sciences faculty member who is on the tenure track, agrees that higher education provides society with individuals who are willing to serve and give back. Dr. Okimi states:

A college education is changing. It gives students an opportunity to think more in-depth about working with people and about serving people...I'm not saying that a high school graduation is not enough, but a college education gives [you] more opportunities to get to know yourself and then to serve people.

Without stating it directly, Dr. Okimi believes that institutions of postsecondary education are responsible for the public good mission, for developing a sense of service amongst a population of people. She also references the private good aspect of education in which an individual is given opportunities to better him or herself.

The importance of service to society was not limited to faculty in the social sciences nor was the private good aspect; a physical scientist also upheld these beliefs. Dr. Shawna Alkhatib, a tenured physical scientist remarks:

In our discipline, [with] a fresh B.S., they get the top notch salaries. But that is not the reason you should choose this major. I believe the reason you should choose to become a physical scientist is because you have a fairly strong background in math, physics, and chemistry and you have a problem solving

bent of mind. [By] putting these things together, maybe you can design a process that can benefit humanity...I would emphasize the societal importance of becoming a scientist, because there are so many problems yet to be solved. And I think we need people who can solve these problems.

Dr. Alkhatib articulates the societal importance in the hard sciences, which is sometimes less apparent compared to disciplines such as social science, agriculture and education. She further asserts that students should pursue the field to give back to humanity, even though the monetary return or private good aspect is quite attractive. Dr. Alkhatib also alludes to issues of academic background and preparation that are required before having the opportunity to pursue a major in her discipline, and then giving back to society. Like others, Dr. Alkhatib did not identify which students deserved access to the major, but her perspective suggests that a certain background is more valued than others in her department, especially intelligence.

Outside of education's role in preparing individuals to serve society, faculty also recognized the contribution to society's overall wellbeing. Dr. Saul Peterman, a pre-tenured social scientist, provides his perspective based upon his research:

I think education is the most important thing we can do in this world. That's why I'm here. That's why I do what I do. Education is the best way to alleviate the majority of our social problems. I don't think that if everyone goes to college, social problems go away. I know that's not true. But I think that there's no other

single change we can make to our society that would alleviate social problems more than increasing education, and making it more widely available to all segments of our society.

It is evident that the public good mission plays a significant role in Dr. Peterman's perception of the world. He believes and embodies the mission by his career choice and through his research. Although he does not specify which social problems, one can imagine that he is referring to crime, drugs, prostitution and other prevalent social issues that society works to eliminate. Dr. Peterman also suggests that access to higher education should be expanded, indicating that social stratification exists in the system of education. The public good mission of institutions of higher education acknowledges this reality and works to alleviate it by providing access to a wide population.

Dr. Tim Yount, a pre-tenured social scientist considers the relationship of public policy, higher education and society and expresses his frustration at the situation through identification of a group who has been denied access to the public good:

I won't even get started talking about the Dream Act stuff because I think that's a whole other level of break down. If the intent is to create a well-educated labor force that's going to help the system as opposed to draw from the system, then denying individuals education....isn't that the antithesis of what you are trying to accomplish?



Dr. Yount's perspective illustrates that fulfilling the public good mission is difficult and positioned within other complicating factors, such as politics and state and federal policies. His annoyance is evident of his belief in the public good mission of the university, but also evokes a sentiment of helplessness or hopelessness. This is worrisome because faculty members are key stakeholders in their communities, and advocacy is important in rectifying issues of inequality. Dr. Yount also provides one specific example of a group of students he feels has been denied access to education. This specificity was unique among participants, but the situation was framed as being "out of the hands" of the institution or faculty. A question of responsibility was further evident in a discussion related to student success.

**A movement to a credential environment challenges the public good mission.**

Dr. Jamie Newman, a pre-tenured faculty member in the agricultural life sciences, discussed the movement to a credential environment and what he witnessed as a result, "I've noticed that some students who come feel it's their right to receive a college degree. I completely disagree with that. They have the right to pursue one, but they don't have the right to receive one." Dr. Newman continued by stating that, "students and parents alike need to understand that just because you come here doesn't mean you're going to be successful. You have an inherent responsibility to be successful." Dr. Newman's view illustrates the mismatch between student and faculty expectations in relation to the focus on securing a credential. It is interesting that on the

one hand, Dr. Newman thinks students have a right to pursue a degree, but cites a student responsibility in order to be successful and earn a degree. Based on the findings of this study and others, it appears that there is a significant student and family responsibility in securing access to postsecondary education, even before considering degree attainment. Furthermore, his view implies a reactive approach to student success on the part of faculty, even though it is this group that determines what is valued and what is considered success. The faculty builds academic programs, shapes curriculum, influences norms and standards, and ultimately assigns grades to student work. Dr. Newman's position is similar to what has historically been referred to as an "ivory tower way of thinking," reactive and dependent on students to prove themselves. Participants in this study have uncovered the challenges students face in securing access and achieving success due to unknown faculty expectations.

Perhaps Dr. Saul Peterman, a pre-tenured social scientist provided more insight into the phenomenon and the byproducts of the credential environment, "Some of them [students] see it [higher education] simply as a credentialing system. What that leads to is that they're seeing this as a business—I pay you money, you give me a product. And that's not what the university is." The emphasis on a credential adds complexity to the access puzzle and challenges the public good mission. This is especially problematic with the national conversation and renewed focus on degree attainment and student success. Faculty who associate the sole focus on a credential

with students who are less worthy of access to the university and to opportunities presents significant challenges for students and for improving access. More broadly, the situation calls into question the purpose and role of higher education, how institutions fulfill an educational mission, and how students are experiencing learning at colleges and universities. Dr. Peterman's account also reflects the current environment of the public's frustration of increased costs, focus on outcomes and accountability, student's expectations, and the institution's preoccupation with resources.

Dr. Peterman may have identified the reasons behind part of the situation that Dr. Newman is experiencing and increasingly becoming frustrated with. Yet, Dr. Newman further states, "I don't know about what they [the university] can do to help students get to college. I'm much more concerned about what can be done to make sure students are successful when they get here." Dr. Newman's disinterest in opportunity suggests that he does not think access to higher education is a problem or does not know what to do about it, and yet he believes students have a right to pursue a degree. His perspective suggests that MU is meeting its public good mission as it relates to access. Yet it is difficult to fully grasp how Dr. Newman understands issues of access, opportunity and the public good. This naivety could challenge the institution's ability to fulfill its public good mission if faculty members do not believe there is room for improvement. Moreover, in both situations Dr. Newman views the responsibility for access and success as the university's purvey, and disconnected to the faculty role.

Finally, the shift in focus on degree attainment presents a challenge to the public good mission that faculty members desire to uphold and instill in their students. The full effect or outcomes of this movement is yet to be seen.

The contextual environment of mission, both institutional and public good, represents a significant finding of this case study. It illustrates the need to truly understand, from multiple perspectives, how an institution fulfills its responsibilities, portrays the public good mission and what this means for student access and success. The next large section of findings represents the faculty perceptions of student backgrounds, attributes, behaviors, and experiences that impact access and success.

### **Section Two: Access for Whom?**

The public good mission of an institution of higher education, especially a land-grant institution, assumes access for everyone, but in practice this means offering an opportunity to education to a large majority of the population. And it is complicated to offer access to a large population. Most institutions have admissions criteria with the goal of deciphering students' level of academic preparation and attendance requires some financial means to pay for the costs, but this study reveals other barriers to access that may be lesser known. The perceptions and biases of who faculty thinks deserves access to the institution emerge to paint an intricate and messy picture of the access puzzle. Faculty perceptions of students' academic ability and preparation, family background and financial means, and attitudes and behaviors make up the themes of

this section of findings. A summary table of themes and subthemes in this section is provided in Table 7 on the next page.

### **Intellectual Ability and Academic Preparation are the Customary Predictors of Success**

As expected, faculty often referenced academic preparation in reference to who belongs in their classrooms, ultimately indicating who deserves access to postsecondary education. The ways in which ability and preparation were discussed widely varied and two camps emerged, faculty members who believed that academics were the most important qualifier for student access and those who believed that other student attributes, such as desire, motivation and persistence were equally as, if not more important. This theme is broken into two subthemes, the first explores a debate of intrinsic ability versus learned or developed skills and the second presents an in-depth discussion about the effects of the K-12 education system, including the role of community colleges.

#### **Raw talent versus learned skills: Which matters more?**

Faculty members discussed student abilities, including those they believed were innate or something a student was born with, as well as learned skills and knowledge. Preconceived notions about intelligence surfaced through faculty participants' perceptions about who they believed deserved access to postsecondary education.

**Table 7****Summary of Themes related to Students & Access – Section Two: Access for Whom**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Subthemes</b>
Intellectual Ability and Academic Preparation are the Customary Predictors of Success	This theme addresses academic preparation in the traditional sense, including what students need to gain access to higher education and be successful. The theme also addresses faculty beliefs about students' innate abilities versus skills they learn.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Raw talent versus learned skills: Which matters more? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Students are born with skills that lead to success.</li> <li>b. Students learn skills that lead to success.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. We cannot fix everything at the university level: K-12 education. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A strong foundation is critical to student access and success.</li> <li>b. Universities must deal with the effects of poor K-12 preparation.</li> <li>c. Community college credit is not the answer.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Family Background becomes Cultural Capital Issues that Determine who Gains Access	This theme addresses students' family background and the characteristics and issues that the faculty viewed as affecting access. Each was associated with a form of cultural capital, in particular knowledge.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Family values and expectations predetermine access. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Deficits in family units can be rectified by role models and early intervention.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Diversity is valued, but racial and ethnic background can still</li> </ol>

		negatively affect access. 3. Socioeconomic background affects access beyond a family's ability to pay.
Faculty Perceptions of Student Attitudes: Demonstrating a Desire to Learn is Essential for Success	This theme addresses the attitudes that faculty members believe are critical for success and at times can compensate for deficits in academic preparation.	1. Passion and motivation are demonstrated through time. 2. Students need to take charge of their education. 3. Students should commit to an educational goal (beyond securing a credential) and work hard to achieve it.

***Students are born with skills that lead to success.***

Dr. Mae Lockett, professor in physical sciences, believed that people fall into a distribution based on skills that they were born with and interests they had developed. She viewed postsecondary education as a place for a wide range of students to tap into their potential and find success. Dr. Lockett stated:

People fall into a distribution. Not everybody can do it [attend college and be successful]. But almost everybody can do it in some aspect of some area. And that's the trick, to find out what people are good at and try and direct them that way while still letting them sample things that they're not so good at.

Everybody's good at different things. Some things require college and some things don't.

Dr. Lockett expressed an open and inclusive perspective. She extended her fundamental belief as it related to students' natural abilities and skills to the role the institution plays in facilitating access to a wide range of students. Viewing the institution as a place for many sectors of the population, especially as it relates to academic ability is critical to expanding access.

Alternatively, Dr. Shawna Alkhatib, a tenured professor in the physical sciences, expressed a sentiment of feeling lucky because she was also able to avoid certain groups of students based on the characteristics of her discipline. Whereas some faculty indicated a preference for working with upperclassman because of a perceived lack of direction or motivation of freshmen and sophomores, Dr. Alkhatib's preference was based on academic ability and anticipated performance:

I am very fortunate that I am in a department where we get the cream of the cream. I think the students who come to our department have an ACT score of 30 or higher. The best minds truly come to my field, so I've had the fortune of teaching really, really smart students...it's only students who have a very strong aptitude in math, physics and chemistry that end up coming into this [field]. It's very demanding. It's not for everyone. So, it's a selection process—just people with that that mindset come to this department.



Dr. Alkhatib referred to a self-selection process based on intelligence, specifically the result of the standardized ACT test. This perspective is disconcerting, given the known racial gap in standardized testing and it discounts the importance of other academic abilities and student attributes, such as those previously discussed. Dr. Alkhatib further discussed her beliefs about intelligence stating, "I think all of us have been given certain amount of talent...so problem solving skills, you're either born with it or you're not born with it. I mean, there's nothing you can do about it." Dr. Alkhatib's view suggests that students cannot be taught certain skills. This view could be seen as contradictory to the purpose of an educational endeavor and roles of both faculty to teach and students to learn. Dr. Alkhatib's view ignores the possibility of overcoming deficiencies and limits access to those who demonstrate a certain competency, solely based on standardized test scores prior to entrance to the university. Both of these faculty members shares the same perspective about natural ability and that college isn't for everyone, that not everyone can do it. However, Dr. Lockett differs from Dr. Alkhatib in that she holds a view that allows for the possibility for students to overcome deficiencies.

Dr. Mae Lockett, professor of physical sciences, acknowledged the necessity of raw talent, but also stated that students could overcome deficiencies to still reach success. She described her view in relation to her past experience:

The truth of the matter is that I'm not bad at math. I just had a bad start. It helps to have good teachers. It helps to have good experiences, but you can overcome

it. You do have to have a certain amount of raw talent. You know, if you're just terrible in math, you're not ever going to be brilliant at it. You can be better, if you feel inspired and you feel that you have some talent for it.

Dr. Lockett's view of openness is once again reflected in her view that students can overcome deficiencies once in college. Unlike Dr. Alkhatib who expected the "cream of the cream," Dr. Lockett expressed a view that some students could improve and succeed without being the best. Dr. Lockett also emphasized the combination of raw talent paired with one's belief in him or herself and feeling inspired as keys to success. This view accommodates a broad population gaining access to education.

Dr. Saul Peterman, assistant professor in social science, summarized the notion that access and success relies on a combination of abilities and experiences, "Students' ability to succeed when they get here is a mix of both their innate abilities and their previous education and socialization." As a social scientist, Dr. Peterman was savvy about the impact socialization had on access to opportunities. His view supports the notion that part of one's academic ability is determined by raw talent or innate abilities, yet acknowledges that this ability is fostered through other educational activities. It was unclear about what Dr. Peterman expected from students entering his classroom with regard to academic skills, but his dual perspective on innate abilities and socialization suggests an important role for faculty and educational systems in helping students learn skills necessary for success in postsecondary education.

***Students learn skills that lead to success.***

Like Dr. Peterman, Dr. Jamie Newman, assistant professor in agricultural life sciences, was vague about the exact skills needed. However, Dr. Newman expressed a strong opinion about mastering skills prior to accessing higher education, "I think we need to make sure that core skills are really being instilled in students, so that we know they've got a chance for success once they get here." Dr. Newman indicates a need to ensure students have core skills that are "instilled" prior to securing access to the institution. Dr. Newman viewed deficiencies as a barrier to access at the university level, but not detrimental to success – outside of the institution. He expected students to demonstrate a certain level of proficiency and to be positioned for success prior to entering the university. This view was different from Dr. Lockett who thought the university was a place to overcome certain deficiencies and Dr. Alkhatib who was less than hopeful about success for anyone with a deficit in knowledge. His view also indicates that he believes students learn the skills the need for success versus being born with them.

Dr. Newman's view also implies a limited or absent role in access on the part of faculty. Yet, the faculty affects access through their expectations and could take an active role in certain activities that would aid in student academic preparation. For instance, Dr. Regi Schmidt, a tenured agricultural scientist, believed that it was the University's job to teach the intellectual skills and knowledge necessary for student

success. Dr. Schmidt stated, “Intellectual ability and being bright is important, but we can help with that part, a lot...that’s what they’re here for.” Dr. Schmidt specifically identified a faculty role in facilitating intelligence and delivering the necessary knowledge to students. This view designates a direct faculty role in facilitating access to postsecondary education. Dr. Schmidt also indicated that while intellectual ability was important, it was not the ultimatum that it was for Dr. Alkhatib. Dr. Schmidt discussed work ethic and the ability to get along with others as other skills that were required for overall student success, and stated that these skills were actually harder to teach than knowledge to his students.

Faculty participants shared several opinions about other academic skills and abilities that were required for success, and in some instances access. Some of the most frequently referenced abilities included critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and mature and independent thinking. Distinctions were often made between these skills that were considered “high-level” compared to the “low-level” skill that is emphasized in high school, memorization. Students who displayed high-level skills were considered well-prepared academically. Dr. Niles Boyd, a pre-tenured business faculty member shared a real outcome of the perception that freshmen entered college unprepared for high-level thinking. The faculty in his field instituted a policy restricting freshmen from taking any courses in their discipline. Dr. Boyd explained:

I think some of the argument is that students are a little more mature and a little more focused so they're better students if they wait a year...However, my feeling is that there are probably a number of students that are very smart and really good, who might be interested in the field. If you don't give them the opportunity to take it earlier, they might be absorbed into some other field and never really come back. I could see some kind of [general] rule or something, but I would favor a relaxation of that to allow a *good* [emphasis added] freshman to take the courses.

The policy Dr. Boyd described represents the epitome of how the faculty controls opportunities that affect access. Dr. Boyd specifies several concerns and potentially negative outcomes for the field given the blanket policy on all freshmen. This type of policy also does not recognize the diversity in the student population at MU and furthermore, reinforces a potential faculty bias. Dr. Boyd indicated his interest in relaxing the policy but only for "good" freshmen who are "very smart." A movement to a policy that allows "good" or "very smart" freshmen to take courses is as likely as the broad brush policy to be rooted in preconceived notions, such as being based on standardized test scores, which are also problematic in several ways.

Similar to student attitudes, the subjective nature of what is considered "good" or "smart" makes it difficult for students to fully understand the faculty's expectations. In addition, the faculty has varied views on the role of intelligence in college access and

success, as well as on a student's ability to remedy and overcome deficiencies in knowledge. There is little consensus on the university's role and even less on the faculty's role in facilitating access, especially as it relates to the value of certain academic abilities and skills in postsecondary education. This disparity in faculty perspectives regarding talent versus learned skills becomes more interesting juxtaposed with the consensus on the issues found in K-12 preparation.

**We cannot fix everything at the university level: K-12 education.**

Faculty participants often referenced the K-12 system and the quality of academic preparation that students received. The faculty viewed students from small, rural schools as disadvantaged in several ways, as well as those from poorly resourced schools. These issues were often described in relation to science and math deficiencies. Some faculty members were savvier than others about the issues facing K-12 schools and relationship between income and school district. However, others took a more accusatory tone, placing blame on the K-12 school system. Faculty also held distinct views about the merit and role of community colleges in student preparation. The quality of a student's academic preparation in the K-12 system, as well as the value of college credit outside of MU, had direct connections to faculty perceptions of who deserved access to the university.

***A strong foundation is critical to student access and success.***

Dr. Saul Peterman, assistant professor in social sciences, cited research showing the trends that educational success and access to postsecondary education began with early education in preschool. Essentially, he discussed the concept of a pipeline to higher education and emphasized the role of the university in each stage, “I think that we have to address problems in lower levels of education too, in order to make sure that everyone who can potentially succeed in college has the opportunity to go...We can’t just fix everything at the college level. We have to fix it at all levels.” Dr. Peterman viewed the university and its faculty as needing to take an active role in ensuring access for “everyone who could potentially succeed.” Dr. Peterman did not provide examples of specific activities to remedy the problems or quantify what would be considered “potential success,” but his belief is likely reflected in his work and interactions with students. Dr. Peterman does not place blame on one level of education and sounded hopeful about the possibility of fixing the problems.

Several faculty members were more specific about the problems in the educational system and they often were in relation to issues of math and science preparation at the K-12 level. It was not only the science faculty who cited concerns about math and science preparation, although these faculty members spoke most often and more passionately than others.

Dr. Sara Alto, associate professor in physical sciences pointed to a significant gap in the pipeline for a particular group of students with regard to math preparation. She expressed extreme worry because of her experience with students preparing to be teachers and the long-term effect she predicted in the system of education. Dr. Alto shared:

I had a group of education majors and I tried to teach them [concepts in physical sciences]. I mean there were lots of really bright girls there, but their level of math was abysmal. Really, I kid you not. It was like third grade math that they didn't know. If they think that the math doesn't matter, it does matter.

Somebody has to teach it. And not only do they have to teach it, but they have to have the right attitude. So, I don't know, I think the education college needs some revamping. I think having teachers be educated in the subject that they're teaching is of paramount importance.

Dr. Alto was frustrated with what she felt like was an overemphasis on pedagogy versus subject matter in teacher preparation. She also felt that the university played a role in creating and solving the problems in the K-12 pipeline. Dr. Alto was willing to teach students who had deficiencies even though she found it challenging and frustrating. This willingness is important considering the significant effort it takes to make headway on systemic problems, like academic preparation. At the same time her experience is troublesome given the significant role math plays in access to college.



Dr. Hank Jensen, professor of physical sciences cites a different concern related to math and science preparation, the façade of good preparation and realization of serious deficiencies.

We'll see students who come here from whatever school and on paper they have done things fairly well, but as soon as they get into our courses, they struggle right from the beginning. They simply don't have the foundation. We're always building in the sciences... if there are a lot of holes then it's difficult to put two and two together, to understand the larger concepts.

Dr. Jensen's experience indicates that while certain markers, like GPA and ACT are important and are relied upon to determine academic preparation, there are instances where these measures are unreliable. Consequently while access to college is largely determined based on scores and grades, the reality of who is prepared and deserves access is much more complex.

Dr. Barry Green, professor in agricultural life sciences concurs, but places the responsibility on the student for maintaining their knowledge versus believing that the student received poor preparation. Dr. Green's view includes the caveat of students coming from a "solid high school program" that assumes strong teachers. He stated, "Even students that come from good, solid high school programs, it's like they've slept through a year or something like that...It's like the carryover wasn't very good. It probably wasn't the teacher. It was probably the student, or maybe a combination of

the two.” Dr. Green’s view further supports the issues of relying on certain academic markers to determine access and predict success once in college. He also alludes to a problem with student’s retaining knowledge, versus the teaching and preparation in the high schools. This issue adds to the complexity and difficulty in addressing problems in academic preparation at the K-12 level.

Faculty also pointed to the more widely known and unquestionable issues with poorly resourced schools, small schools and rural schools. Dr. Hank Jensen understood issues with poorly resourced schools from personal experience and referred to these schools as “failure mills,” setting students up to fail. He acknowledged that the choice of a K-12 school setting was often out of the hands of students. He believed that the outcome of attending a poorly resourced school were groups of students struggling to meet faculty expectations and catch up, if they made it to postsecondary education. Dr. Jensen, professor in physical sciences stated:

I think we have to be realistic and realize that a lot of the kids who are coming from a low-income situation and poor neighborhoods, the school foundations are not going to be anywhere near as comparable to students who are coming from the higher end...These students probably have a higher likelihood of not being successful—not due to the fact that these students are not enthusiastic, not due to the fact that these students are not motivated, not due to the fact that these students do not want to succeed. But simply the point is that they are

[likely to not succeed], because of their twelve years of poor public education.

They are significantly behind their peers and it's hard to catch up in college.

Dr. Jensen called it "ridiculous" to expect students from poorly resourced schools to meet all of the demands of college curriculum, especially in math and science. Although, he did not believe success was impossible or that access to the university should be limited for students from poorly resourced schools, he understood the difficulties these students faced in catching up to their peers.

Dr. Alton Sanders, a tenured faculty in physical sciences, agreed with Dr. Jensen about the relationship between income and poorly resourced schools, "People with low-incomes are in neighborhoods where the secondary schools are not very good, which may mean that the students don't have good preparation in math and science." Dr. Sanders focused on the high school level preparation and also agreed with Dr. Jensen that students could catch up in college, but that it would be very difficult. In general faculty participants who discussed poorly resourced schools tied them to issues in math and science preparation and very rarely to concepts in other disciplines. Only two faculty members mentioned other areas, foreign language programs and art education, which they stated had undergone significant cuts in K-12 settings due to resourcing issues. Several faculty members also referenced limited access to other opportunities, such as Advanced Placement courses. These opportunities build upon the students' foundation to be successful and reflect holes in the pipeline of education.

***Universities must deal with the effects of poor K-12 preparation.***

The access literature supports the notion that students from poorly resourced schools are disadvantaged in securing access to postsecondary education. Interestingly many of the faculty in this study did not indicate that students from these schools did not deserve access to the university, but instead focused on the deficiencies and the challenges students faced in catching up. Perhaps because choice of school is out of the students' control, faculty members in this context were more willing to accept the possibility that students could overcome deficiencies, unlike in a discussion about general academic ability. However, the deficiencies, especially those in math and science manifested themselves in complicated ways for the faculty and they had varied views on supporting students in overcoming them at the university level.

Dr. Hank Jensen, professor in physical sciences, focused on issues of transition for students with poor preparation, in particular for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Dr. Jensen stated:

I think we've got to be realistic and recognize the fact that these students need a transition. They need to basically be caught up...They might not potentially have the skill set and not due to any lack of enthusiasm and ability, but simply because the system has partially failed them.

Dr. Jensen's view demonstrates an understanding of the barriers low-income students face and recognizes the need for additional support from the university and faculty. Dr.

Jensen does not blame the students themselves or their families. Instead he cites “the system” which drilled-down could mean school systems, but more likely is in reference to societal systems and the importance of social class in accessing opportunities. Dr. Jensen believed students from low-income backgrounds deserved access to the university and that the university had a role in helping them meet expectations through providing transition programs.

On the other hand, Dr. Jamie Newman, assistant professor in agricultural life sciences, painted a grim picture for students who had a math deficiency, regardless of the cause:

We see students that come in that actually have to take remedial math classes before they can even take a math class for credit. That’s a fairly large deficiency...I don’t know the statistics, but those students that come in at that level, I’m afraid that they’re just not prepared for academic success at a university, so it probably does them a disservice as well [as the university].

Unlike the others, Dr. Newman framed “catching up” as remediation and assumed students with poor math preparation would be unsuccessful. He essentially questioned if was a disservice to students with a math deficiency to be admitted to the institution. He further alluded to the problems that could be created for the university and faculty by providing access to students with a math deficiency. Remediation at the college level is complicated and there are not many easy solutions. Yet, Dr. Newman’s view

eliminates the possibility for students to overcome a deficiency and positions students with deficiencies as a “problem” for the institution. It is unlikely that he believes these students deserve access to postsecondary education.

Many faculty participants also cited limited opportunities at small or rural schools which could disadvantage students and impact access. One tenured faculty member with many years of service at MU, Dr. Penny Shanks recalled a time when the college of agriculture considered going against administrators’ decisions on implementing admissions standards for fear of denying access to students from rural parts of the state. She reflected on the intense discussions and eventual agreement that the college of agriculture made with admissions when they implemented the college preparatory curriculum:

At first, they [the college faculty] wanted to waive the requirements so that students who may have went to a small school and couldn’t get enough math skills would still be able to come here. But I think we compromised in a sense that we let students do one to two years of remedial math to make up the skills.

Dr. Shanks recalled that the college faculty was prepared to fight and opt out of the policy until the administration addressed their concerns. Interestingly the agreement was to allow for remedial math, which her colleague Dr. Newman, also in agricultural life sciences, is readily opposed to.

An additional aspect of the weakness in math and science preparation is discussed by Dr. Marty Gore, associate professor in physical sciences. Dr. Gore specifically cited issues with resources in teaching laboratories at small schools and the impact it had on students:

The problem is the lab. Doing the labs is expensive. The smaller the school, even if they conglomerate a bunch of them, there's still not enough [resources]. A teacher might be teaching math and chemistry, or chemistry and physics, or chemistry and life sciences or whatever. They won't be a real expert in doing the experiments, which means they don't have enough to offer the student, to guide them through understanding the material and what they are you looking at when you're doing this experiment...I just always wonder, if the science experience had been richer in more schools, would we get more majors? I can't believe the answer would be no.

Dr. Gore provided a detailed explanation of role of good experiments and experienced teachers in facilitating knowledge and understanding in the sciences. He also cited limited interest and access to certain majors as potential outcomes of poor experiences with laboratories at the high school level. With a national focus on improving science and math preparation and ultimately increasing degree attainment in these areas, Dr. Gore's insight is significant. To achieve the national goals, students must first secure access to these majors and be prepared adequately for success. Dr. Gore did not draw

any conclusions regarding access to the university, but instead was focused on the sciences and his discipline.

Dr. Barry Green, professor in agricultural life sciences agreed with Dr. Gore regarding the issue of limited faculties in small schools, but related the issue to access. Dr. Green seemed complacent with the problems associated with small schools and the consequences for the university:

I hear students a lot of times say well, you know we had one chemistry teacher [for the school] and he or she wasn't very good. Some of that is in the nature of small schools, and you're never going to get around that. In the smaller schools, it's a limited faculty. There are going to be weaknesses that are probably unavoidable. We just deal with those once the student gets here.

Dr. Green's perspective connects the issues in K-12 education to postsecondary education in an interesting way. He views the university's role as one that offsets long-standing and well-known problems in K-12 settings. He seems content, even satisfied with this reality, not placing any blame on K-12 system. Furthermore, his willingness to accept the responsibility indicates an active role on his part in helping students alleviate deficiencies.

Dr. Saul Peterman, assistant professor in social sciences, seemed less content and extended issues with K-12 preparation in math and science to the phobias student hold and struggle to overcome:



A lot of students come in with very poor math skills. Not only with poor math skills, but a math phobia...they're scared to death of it and I don't know why.

We're clearly not training young people in math, and we're leaving a lot of them where they're just scared of math.

Dr. Peterman's view indicated not only an expectation of adequate math preparation at the K-12 level, but also for the K-12 system to encourage certain attitudes and instill self-confidence in students' preparation. Dr. Peterman's concern also indicates the calamity of the situation in that not only are students unprepared, but they are too scared to overcome the deficiency. It is likely that the combination of students being underprepared and fearful significantly impacts access to higher education and hinders efforts to improve access.

Another social scientist, Dr. Heather Makey, professor, stressed the effects of fear on student learning, "We talk very pragmatically about fear of mathematics, fear of science. We don't talk very pragmatically about students who fear alternative views. I've had students who are pretty good at thinking their way through some complex issues, but they're afraid to let go of a core belief." Dr. Makey's statement points to the vast array of expectations of the faculty, in that not only should students have mastered higher-level skills, but they also need to be equipped to demonstrate maturity and tolerance for alternative views. Dr. Makey's statement may also reveal why many faculty participants focused on math and science preparation in their discussions

regarding academic preparation. Skills such as these are often talked about nationally and pragmatically, whereas others go unexpressed and are often considered understood. Success, and ultimately access relies on the combination of both competency and an aptitude for learning. Thus, failure to identify and clearly articulate the skills needed for success in postsecondary education may inhibit the K-12 system from meeting academic preparation expectations, and as a result disadvantages students.

Students with poor K-12 preparation face limited access to the university and restricted access to certain majors and opportunities once on campus. Students with deficiencies face significant challenges in catching up to their peers and may face some barriers when interacting with some faculty. Faculty participants tended to agree about the importance of math and science preparation, but varied on the role of the institution and faculty in remedying issues in the system or pipeline. Although consensus is unlikely, this represents an important finding when policy makers consider how to address the access puzzle and “leaky” pipeline.

*Community college credit is not the answer.*

Most of the faculty participants who discussed issues related to community college credit understood that it was often an access point for students, especially for financial reasons. However, very few talked positively about community college credit

and one faculty participant shared a new college policy disallowing transfer credit in their major.

Dr. Dag Aguilar, associate professor of physical sciences, stated that he believed the primary motivation for attending a community college was cost. He did not blame students for pursuing cheaper education, given the increased costs at the four-year universities. However, Dr. Aguilar was critical of the education students received at a community college, "They have taken care of their first two years of their education, but it's not at the same level as it is at the university, almost never." As a result, Dr. Aguilar said students enter the university behind their peers. Although Dr. Aguilar held an open view on students choosing to attend community colleges, his view on the level of quality and preparation indicates implications for student access. Transfer students will also need the faculty's assistance in "catching up," similar to those entering with deficiencies from K-12.

Dr. Niles Boyd, assistant professor in business, discussed a proposal at the college level that took a blanket approach to dealing with the perceived quality issues of transfer credit. The proposal restricted the acceptance of transfer credit to general education or elective credit only. In other words, credit would not be accepted in the major. Dr. Boyd commented on the proposal:

In the short term, it lowers the accessibility somewhat. If you have students that have taken them [business classes] and they no longer count, that would hurt

some of the accessibility. I suspect that over the longer run students that are thinking of transferring to Midwestern University then they'll take that [the policy] into account. So, if they need to take more at the Midwestern University, maybe that's going to raise their cost a little bit, or maybe they will substitute other classes that they can transfer in from a junior college.

Like Dr. Aguilar, Dr. Boyd recognized the financial reality of students opting to attend the community college. Interestingly however, the proposal Dr. Boyd discussed could end up costing students more money unless they are particularly savvy and plan their transfer to you intentionally and early. Dr. Boyd continued to describe the proposal from the college viewpoint:

I think it's a balancing act. We want to offer a lot of accessibility to good students in the state, but we also want to have high standards. There is concern that when students are going into higher level classes, the ones coming from junior colleges have significant deficits, so there appears to be good reasons for having these kinds of changes made.

Unlike Dr. Aguilar who welcomed students with deficiencies, even if they had to catch up, the same frame of mind is not evident by the faculty who initiated this proposal. This type of proposal calls attention to the outcomes of faculty perceptions and bias, and points to the type of control that faculty have on access and opportunities for students—even before they attend the university.

Dr. Heather Makey, professor of social science's perspective and understanding of the community college system may provide some context for the proposal Dr. Boyd discussed. She explained:

The articulation [between community colleges and the university] is not there because there is no credentialing of the people who are teaching these courses. You don't have to have a master's degree in X to teach X courses in a community college. You can have a bachelor's in electronics and teach an English course at a community college.

Dr. Makey understands how the lack of an agreed upon articulation causes problems for students, "Students want to take advantage of that cheaper education process, which I am all in agreement with. They should have a quality education that is seamless with a four year college or university." However, Dr. Makey views the problem as the community college's because they "hire the cheapest people they can get" and the consequences are a lack of articulation at the university level. Dr. Makey's view points to underlying beliefs about the quality of education at the community college level. Although the situation may not be true across the board, like the proposal in Dr. Boyd's area, Dr. Makey has a generalized view of the quality of community college education. These views may negatively impact solutions to improving college access.

Even Dr. Barry Green, professor in agricultural life sciences, who thought community college aided in academic preparation became suspicious at a point, "It's

always great to see a student coming to us with 6, 9, even 12 credits of college transfer courses. If it's more than that, I start getting a little suspicious." Based on the numbers of credits that Dr. Green thought was beneficial to the student, it is clear that he also holds preconceived notions about the value of community college credit.

In general faculty perceptions were more severe regarding community colleges compared to the K-12 system. Few faculty participants commented about how to assist or aid transfer students into the university and instead focused on the issues of transfer credit and perceived lack of quality. Faculty perceptions of community college preparation should be further explored to add to the completeness of the access picture. Without this understanding, students may continue to be disadvantaged in securing access to the university and face outcomes of faculty bias, if they opt to attend a community college first or accumulate many credits.

In sum, faculty participants expressed passionate opinions when it came to intelligence and academic preparation. There seemed to be two groups of faculty amidst the various perspectives, those who believed that a student's academic ability was paramount and determined who should and should not have access to the postsecondary education. These faculty participants often viewed issues related to preparation as someone else's problem. This group took a narrow stance on the deficits in preparation and preferred to work with students who were well-prepared, the "best and brightest." The other group of faculty took the position that skills could be learned

and that the university was a place to help students overcome deficits in preparation. These faculty members tended to value other skills and attitudes as much as a student's academic aptitude.

The views on the importance of strong academic preparation and the role of the educational pipeline are also important to understanding the full scope that academics plays in achieving access. The extent to which faculty participants focused on science and math preparation indicates a need for further study and analysis, including specificity of these skills in access models. Similar to issues of learned versus innate abilities, some faculty thought the university was a place for overcoming poor preparation and the reality of today's society. However, others thought that admitting students with deficiencies was doing the student and faculty a disservice and preferred for someone else to take responsibility for helping the student. The faculty also indicated that community college credit was rarely the answer to poor preparation and was only valued in certain situations. This finding presents a dilemma for students further analyzed in Chapter Five.

The next theme explores family background and financial means which is closely related to academic ability given that many opportunities are enabled by resources and determined by family values and circumstances.

## **Aspects of Family Background become Cultural Capital Issues that Determine who Gains Access**

Faculty participants easily identified family background and factors situated within students' upbringing that affected access to the postsecondary education. Several faculty members made sense of these factors based on their own personal experiences. Others relied on what they understood from working with students or heard from colleagues. Issues related to cultural capital (i.e. non-financial social assets that promote social mobility), family norms and demographics, as well as socioeconomic status and a family's ability to pay educational costs were the two main subthemes that emerged. How to compensate for certain deficiencies related to family background, such as role models and early intervention make up the third subtheme. Faculty described the issues within the subthemes in a myriad of ways. Some faculty members were able to make the connection that the issue that they were discussing was related to a certain family demographic or trait, such as race or class. However, others viewed the demographic traits as being the barrier to access and are less specific about the related cultural capital issues. For example, Dr. Tim Yount believes that Latino youth are discouraged from pursuing postsecondary education based upon racial background alone. Faculty views on diversity initiatives and the importance of a diverse student body also emerged in this subtheme.



**Family values and expectations and predetermine access.**

This subtheme reflects the faculty views of the importance of family values and expectations and cultural capital associated with these traits that affect access. Values, attitudes, norms, expectations, knowledge and behaviors are all cited by faculty participants. Faculty participants described the necessity of possessing a these things prior to entrance to the university. Many felt so strongly about the implications of one's upbringing that few saw alternatives for gaining the cultural capital needed for access outside of the family unit. However, early intervention and role models were referenced as a possibility to help students who lacked the cultural capital skills from their families.

Dr. Bob Samuels, tenured professor in agricultural life sciences, believed that parenting was a critical factor for student access and success. He referenced attitudes and skills of several students who he enjoyed working with and then attributed their ability to demonstrate these attributes to their "upbringing." Dr. Samuels shared, "I think they were all good, hardworking, intelligent kids that had a curiosity about what science was...my sense is that they came to their undergraduate programs with that enthusiasm already instilled in them from their parents and families." Dr. Samuels does not consider that some students may be from families where such skills are less likely to be fostered. However, he thought these attributes needed to be developed prior to attending college and states a preference for working with students who possess and demonstrate a certain cultural capital. Dr. Samuels also valued the role of parents to the

point that he preferred talking with them on recruiting visits, "I think it's more valuable to talk to the parents than it is students...they are much more likely to ask questions and to be more enthusiastic about listening to what you have to say than the students are."

Dr. Samuels' view may reflect the increasingly involved role parents play in some students' academic decisions and college choice. However, his view also indicates some frustration with students who lack enthusiasm and focus that is demonstrated in a particular way, such as through asking questions and active listening. He discounts the value of students being independent or controlling their own destiny, which other participants cited as important. Dr. Samuels' view does not allow for the possibility that students can develop the skills and attitudes needed despite family background and parenting.

Dr. Emily Eby, assistant professor in social sciences, articulated the role of family values and expectations in encouraging students to attend postsecondary education, "I think it's a lot easier for people when it's just an expectation that they'll go to school. I think that's a lot easier because it's built in. Their families help to teach them the way through." Dr. Eby believed that family values and expectations were connected to the family's ability to disseminate knowledge that would support college enrollment. Dr. Eby also shared a personal experience when discussing the role of family and credited her father for instilling the value of a college education in her and her siblings. She recalled that her father, a first-generation college graduate would have no self-esteem if

he had not gone to college. She anticipated that her route to higher education would have been difficult if her father had not been passionate about the significant role education played in his life. Because of this perception, Dr. Eby identified first-generation college students as a group that was disadvantaged in securing access to college. She also had ideas about engaging students' families as a way for supporting first-generation student college attendance, "what's really important is finding a way to engage their family members, so that the family members don't feel threatened by it." Although she felt like the "university could only do so much, when college is new to a family," she supported and saw merit in these efforts. Dr. Eby's perspective assumes family *should* be involved, illustrates her view of the importance of the family role, and indicates support for efforts to increase access, even if it would be difficult.

Dr. Goldie Harper, assistant professor in social sciences, also believed that family expectations played a significant role in college access. She reflected on her own experience and then stated that she was unsure what could be done to compensate for students who did not experience family expectations related to college attendance:

I'm trying to think back to when I was in high school and how I learned about colleges. We had a guidance counselor. I remember talking to my guidance counselor at one point, but that definitely wasn't the most meaningful conversation. I think we had a college fair where you could go around to different booths and get a sense of colleges and universities...but it's hard, so

much of it was just expected. It wasn't a question about are you going to go to college or not. It was which college. It's harder for me to imagine the university helping in that way.

Dr. Harper references some of the traditional ways in which students learn about college, but she acknowledges that these were not useful for her college learning and exploration. Instead, the driving force and key factor was her family's expectation. Dr. Harper's statement that it is hard for her to imagine the university helping students in a similar way does not rule out the possibility, but indicates a less than hopeful outlook that the university could impact students in this way.

Dr. Alton Sanders, professor of physical sciences connected family expectations to social class, stating, "The students who do the best are those who come from families where education is a high priority. It seems to correlate with income, but not always." Sanders' view leaves room for the possibility that income may not always correlate with expectations related to education, but expresses it as the exception to the norm. His view also indicates that family expectations are critical not only to access, but to students' success as well.

Dr. Niles Boyd, assistant professor in business, identified first-generation students as a group that was disadvantaged in securing access to postsecondary education due to family knowledge and expectations. However, he also specifies parents' occupation as a potential barrier for students:

If they're a first-generation student and depending on what their parents' occupations are, they're going to have a lot of different information about things. Parents that have gone to college and expect that their kids go to college probably know a lot about the different kinds of jobs, different avenues, and expectations. I'm sure there are people that are potentially first-generation that don't even really fully consider a college education. They see it as being expensive and don't understand the returns. There might be parents also that see it as wasting time instead of getting a real job.

Dr. Boyd places significant value on the parents' occupations in families that establish expectations and support college enrollment. He emphasizes the private good aspects of earning a degree, such as securing a job and increased earnings that he believes first-generation parents may not understand. Although Dr. Boyd is attentive to the market aspects of earning a college degree, he does not indicate expenses as a barrier for families. Instead, he is focused on the understanding and knowledge that families provide students. This represents an important perspective that knowledge and understanding, aspects of cultural capital may be as important as the "traditional" barriers to access, such as academics and finances. This notion is conceptually addressed in academic capital formation models which were presented in Chapter Two and will be revisited in Chapter Five.

***Deficits in family units can be rectified by role models and early intervention.***

Some faculty members cited alternatives for how students could gain the cultural capital skills needed to access the university or compensate for a family background that did not value education. These perspectives were important because they further specified the ways in which faculty members believed students could secure access to postsecondary education.

Dr. Hank Jensen, professor in physical sciences discussed the extreme issues of family dysfunction and the detriment it has on students. He identified issues such as alcohol, drugs, violence, sex, and coming from a single parent home, but believed that early outreach and messages about the power of education improved the odds of students attending college:

By the time students are in high school, I think they've pretty much determined what they want to do. I think interacting and working with kids at the middle school or even late elementary school, to start sowing the seeds at that earliest time, especially when you're dealing with students coming from low-income families [and families where there is dysfunction], where those discussions, those opportunities are probably not even talked about...And if the goal is reaching out to kids who aren't going to college, those are the ones who aren't going because they don't see it as an opportunity or as an option.

Dr. Jensen sees education as a possibility for students from troubled families provided that they're introduced to education early. He is less hopeful about students who have already entered high school. Dr. Jensen's belief about the timing of outreach is another aspect of the college access puzzle and may be important getting faculty buy-in to improve college access.

Dr. Penny Shanks, professor in agricultural life sciences also believed that early outreach was critical to improving access, "I think higher education is accessible, but if there's not a little bit of early contact to help somebody realize the possibilities, it probably doesn't feel accessible. I'm not sure we're doing a lot about that." Dr. Shanks is concerned that the university is not addressing outreach at an early enough stage to help students believe that education could be a reality. She does not specify how early outreach efforts should be targeted, but indicates that they are important and that the university has a role to play in outreach. Additionally, Dr. Shanks fundamentally believes that higher education is accessible and acknowledges that students need help in understanding college and believing that it is a possibility.

Dr. Quincy Anderson, assistant professor in agricultural life sciences, believed that high schools had a significant role to play in college access, specifically in compensating for a lack of family knowledge about college. Dr. Anderson reflected on one of his friends' experiences and how it differed from his own:

My friends [who were lower income and first-generation] did end up going to college. They were introduced to the idea and encouraged to pursue it by the school. It was certainly not that their parents were hostile to the idea of higher education. It just wasn't something that they had in their mind as something that you do. So, I guess encouragement within schools can go a long way.

Dr. Anderson did not specify which level of education helped his friends achieve access to postsecondary education, but believe schools had a long term impact for his friends. The responsibility of exposing and educating students about the opportunities of education and college were shared by Dr. Anderson's colleague, Dr. Chad Roof, but from a slightly different perspective.

Dr. Chad Roof, assistant professor in agricultural life sciences, believed that all students are exposed to college opportunities in high school, thus the university should focus on explaining to students the differences between high school and college. Dr. Roof stated:

All high school students are in a culture where they're continually thinking about whether it's good to go to college or not. So I would say that coming to college is not just about training for a job, but it's also about proving yourself as a person with experiences of meeting people from other places, learning about different ways of doing things, and being exposed to subjects that you may think you're not interested in.



Like Dr. Shanks, Dr. Roof was interested in helping students understand what higher education is, but he came from a viewpoint that all students were already exposed to a culture that expects college attendance. He placed the responsibility on high schools to establish a culture of college expectations and did not think that high school was too late to instill these in students. When asked if his approach would change if talking with a group of first-generation students, Dr. Roof replied, "No, I don't think so. It would be the same." This view does not take into account the various types of students and their family backgrounds or the disparity among high schools which was identified earlier as being a barrier to college access. However, these views continue to point to the faculty's belief that schools, even beyond their role in academic preparation, are important for students to achieve college access.

Dr. Gary Jobes, professor in business was more specific about the impact of role models for students from lower income, first-generation and diverse backgrounds. He specifically cited President Obama and referenced what he calls the "Obama Effect":

Regardless of politics, regardless of ideologies, President Obama gives you the belief that you can grow up and become president. Kids who don't value education, they need role models...By having a Black president, we now see Black experts on TV and their opinions are being sought. Pre-Obama, you could count the number of Black experts...Obama's administration has been very positive and that's the Obama effect.

Dr. Jobes' believes that national role models were important for students to be inspired and to believe in opportunities. Dr. Jobes' view is unrelated to what the faculty or university could do to improve access, but illustrates another opinion about how faculty members make sense of student motivation to attend college and what barriers they may face. Dr. Jobes believed a lack of role models, even national role models negatively affected the value students placed on education.

Dr. Sue Jones, associate professor in arts and humanities, agrees that role models that look like certain student groups are important in helping students to access education. When Dr. Jones works with students in the community, she is cautious about pushing her value system and instead focuses on being a resource for students. She shared her experience:

When you're working in the community, particularly within lower income areas, it's really important to not push your value system on other people because there's nothing that will put a barrier between you and others faster than saying you have to go to college. For junior high kids, it's really important for them to see a person of color who might be more like them or their family. Sometimes they don't know that you can go to school to study certain subjects so we talk about it...I let them know about scholarship opportunities and things like that. I just don't want them to be like this is not possible, or a college education is only this one thing.

Dr. Jones is very conscientious about her interactions with students. She believes in expanding access and proactively tries to be a role model for students. Unlike many participants, she was able to cite her own involvement in outreach efforts to increase access. Dr. Jones referenced her goal in helping students understand what college was about and in navigating the complexities of the landscape. Like other participants, she believed that early experiences had the most impact and approached access from the frame that not all students believed that education was a possibility as a result of their family background.

One unique perspective was Dr. Dag Aguilar's, associate professor in physical sciences. Dr. Aguilar shared his personal story of getting to college and emphasized family sacrifice, mentors, and "luck" that set him up for success. Dr. Aguilar reflected on the low-income neighborhood he grew up in and on his friends when said, "There's some amount of just blind luck involved when you make it through, but your friends don't." Dr. Aguilar discussed the choices that people make without realizing the long term impact and although there were many factors that contributed to his success, he acknowledged an element of luck. Dr. Aguilar cited luck in teachers approaching him with opportunities, making good choices and being willing to accept the resources others provided him and his family. Dr. Aguilar had mentors reach out to him, encourage him on his educational path, and provide access to opportunities. Yet, many faculty participants viewed mentoring and asking for help as the students' responsibility,

even if it played a significant role in their experience. Implications of this finding are further explored in Chapter Five.

Faculty strongly believed that family background played a significant role in facilitating expectations and values that were critical to gaining access to the university. In instances where the family was unable to provide the skills to equip students to be successful in gaining access, faculty identified a role for high schools, mentors and early outreach. The undertones of the faculty views indicated hopefulness that these alternatives helped students gain access; however, their views also implied that it was not a guarantee like family background. In other words, role models and early intervention provided exposure and encouragement that was viewed as a factor in gaining access, whereas family background and the associated cultural capital was viewed as a predictor in determining access. The views related to racial and ethnic family demographics are explored next.

**Diversity is valued, but racial and ethnic background can still negatively affect access.**

For the most part, faculty participants indicated diversity was a personal value, but also identified racial and ethnic demographics as a barrier to securing access to college. In some instances race and ethnicity was connected back to issues of cultural capital skills such as in Dr. Yount's view. Dr. Tim Yount, a pre-tenured social science faculty member shared what he saw happening in the high schools with regard to Latino

students. The factor identified is connected back to knowledge and the family's ability to advise the student. Dr. Yount stated:

There isn't encouragement of our Latinos in the state to go on to higher education. There is discouragement from it. If counselors are telling these students to not take certain courses, even if they decide to go to college, they aren't qualified. They have to take remedial courses to be prepared for it and the likelihood that the parents are going to know that is really low. Most of the immigrant families are not college educated. They aren't going to know that if their kid doesn't take courses A, B and C that they aren't going to get into college.

Dr. Yount identifies a bias among high school counselors that directly impacts a student's ability to access postsecondary education. Although the counselor recommendations affected a student's academic preparation, Dr. Yount emphasized the powerful role of parents and their families to help students take control of their education. This perspective was aligned with other participants who believed students needed to be empowered to be successful in higher education. It appears families play a significant role in facilitating self-confidence and advocacy. Dr. Yount also cited issues more plainly related to demographic barriers and biases on the part of the general population:

I think there is a pretty good investment from taxpayers saying, I want farm boy out in small county X to get a good education. I want my money to go to help him get an education. But I'm going to throw a fit when I see a Latino kid getting an education.

Dr. Yount's statement references issues related to the state's version of the Dream Act and the lack of support from taxpayer. Once again, Dr. Yount identifies a perceived bias that is outside of the university's purvey, but one that ultimately affects student access. It is clear that he believes student immigrants deserve access to higher education, with the financial support of the state. Dr. Yount's frustration indicates that he values diversity, holds an inclusive view of access and believes that immigrants deserve access to MU.

Dr. Gary Jobes, tenured professor in business, agrees with Dr. Yount and blames the state political climate, specifically the state leadership for the access issues related to immigrants:

I'm very strongly opposed to the governor and his view of students who've got to have a high school degree but weren't born here and who don't get in-state tuition. I think that's incredibly stupid. I've done work on acculturation. How does the second generation do better? Well, you give them every opportunity...I think there's ignorance on his part. I think he's the biggest stumbling block.

Dr. Jobes cites his own research when discussing the rationale for expanding access to the immigrant population and emphasizes the opportunity that higher education provides students and their families. He openly and passionately expresses his disagreement with the state's policy. His view of the governor as a "stumbling block" suggests that like Dr. Yount, Dr. Jobes sees few alternatives to change the situation. Unfortunately, the students impacted are denied access to the university, even if the faculty has a different view. This situation illustrates the complexity and interplay of public policy and university activity.

Dr. Penny Shanks, tenured professor in agricultural life sciences, also addressed issues with students of illegal immigrant families and their lack of ability to receive access to the institution. Unlike Drs. Yount and Jobes, Professor Shanks implicates the university as having a role in improving the situation for these students, "We have a lot of immigrant labor in the state, and I'm not sure that access is great for that particular population, or encouraged. It's not something we've addressed from the university system, in my opinion." Although Dr. Shanks does not offer specific actions that the university could take to improve the situation of the immigrant population, her statement indicates an expectation that the university take an active role in facilitating and encouraging access. Dr. Shanks values diversity but sees citizenship as a barrier to access, regardless of other skills and capabilities.

However, there were dissenting views regarding expanding access to immigrant populations. Dr. Niles Boyd, pre-tenured faculty member in business stated, “In terms of citizenship, I think that that’s something that should be taken care of before you get to college.” Dr. Boyd placed responsibility on the students and their families to secure citizenship prior to considering college. This view suggests a lack of understanding regarding the issues surrounding immigration and disinterest in the effects of barring educational opportunities to certain students based on racial and ethnic background. For example, Dr. Boyd does not consider that some students might not have a path to citizenship. Dr. Boyd’s view also exposes the potential challenges the university could face in attempting to create solutions without a larger policy directive from the state or federal government.

In addition to the issue of immigrant students, faculty also discussed racial and ethnic diversity in the more traditional sense. Dr. Dag Aguilar, associate professor in physical sciences, shared an inclusive view of access regarding ethnic and racial demographics and like others expressed frustration with the reality he had witnessed, “There have been off-and-on efforts to increase diversity here at the university...but I don’t see a whole lot of commitment necessarily from the majority of people on campus. I think they’re all fine with it, if somebody else does it.” Dr. Aguilar would like to see the university address issues related to ethnic and racial diversity in more substantive ways, including being more proactive in recruiting undergraduates. Dr.



Aguilar values diversity but assumes students from diverse backgrounds need more encouragement and support in order to attend MU.

Dr. Yoshi Okimi, assistant professor in social sciences, agrees with the need to increase diversity on campus and articulates her perspective of the benefits of a diverse student body in the classroom:

As a university, we need the perspectives of those students who didn't have that opportunity before. We need them and also they need us. It's a kind of a mutual thing. If we know more about these students with diverse backgrounds, thanks to their sharing of knowledge and information about their own backgrounds and experiences, then the faculty will come up with ideas that could contribute to the field. It's a win-win type of thing. You learn from each other and that's really valuable.

Dr. Okimi specifies first-generation and students from diverse backgrounds as those who are missing from her classroom. Dr. Okimi values diversity but also assumes that students face more barriers in securing access based on certain familial demographics and background traits. Her comment provides insight into one of the faculty perspectives that may underlie inclusive views and motivate faculty contributions to efforts such as increasing access for students. Dr. Okimi referenced giving back by advancing her field, which likely also has societal impact given her discipline home in the social sciences.

Dr. Emily Eby, assistant professor in social sciences, also believes in having diversity in the classroom and expresses worry about the effects of not achieving this. Her passionate response to a recent faculty senate committee meeting reveals the variety of opinions on campus and the complexity of the access issues on campus:

Senior Vice President Taylor was talking about how to improve recruitment strategies. She talked about how we need to be recruiting all students in the state, essentially the whole range of people. Then one of the executive committee members asked, do we sacrifice the quality of our programs to recruit everybody? The committee member said that one of her programs was struggling because there were students who struggled with their command of the English language and she said that it made it harder to have honors program. My reaction was—who are you leaving behind? There's such tremendous value in having the whole range of diversity in your classrooms. I think so much more can be gained there than by having every program be an honors program. That's part of the reason why I have such an emotional response when I hear people say well, we won't support our honors program if we just let anybody in. I'm thinking, wait a minute, we're missing out on talented, amazing people. Their life experiences help to prepare other students because they don't have those life experiences, and they don't understand.

Dr. Eby's account of the faculty meeting indicates a faculty concern of expanding access at the cost of sacrificing quality. Specifically, the individual expressed issues with students who had a poor command of the English language. Dr. Eby's account of this experience suggests that some members of the faculty may not support access for nonnative speakers. Dr. Eby disagreed with the view and shared her concern that a focus on honors programs could leave students behind. Essentially, Dr. Eby placed more value on the achieving diversity in the classroom than on having numerous honors programs. She saw value in students from diverse backgrounds teaching other students so that they could benefit from understanding different backgrounds. The aspect of sharing and learning from diverse experiences is critical to the pedagogy of Dr. Eby's field, similar to Dr. Okimi's.

Faculty participants identified one's family demographics and background as factors that influenced and determined access to postsecondary education. Dr. Yount connected racial and ethnic background to the students' cultural capital skills, but most of the other faculty discussed race and ethnicity more plainly. Although the faculty participants indicated a value of diversity at the university and in the classroom, many believed that racial and ethnic background negatively affected access and assumed that students from these backgrounds faced additional barriers in securing access. Issues surrounding citizenship were described as complex from a political point of view, but more simply stated in that faculty thought access to the university should be

encouraged and provided. Several faculty participants, especially those in the social sciences were attuned to the negative impact on the classroom and learning experience with a homogenous population. This finding is further explored in Chapter Five. Issues related to family social class and financial means are discussed next.

**Socioeconomic background affects access beyond a family's ability to pay.**

Many faculty members believed that family finances were the biggest barrier to access, while others believed that scholarships and funding were readily available to students. Often faculty connected socioeconomic status back to issues of cultural capital such as knowledge about funding opportunities as the barrier to access, versus having enough resources to pay for college costs. Faculty members also believed that students from lower income backgrounds needed to be exceptional relative to their peers – not only to be successful, but to have an opportunity to attend postsecondary education.

Dr. Jamie Newman, assistant professor in agricultural life sciences acknowledges the challenges students from low-income families face in attending the university. However, he states that scholarship dollars for low-income students should only be available to those who are “extremely bright.” Dr. Newman said, “The availability of scholarships is critical...and continuing to build and support the current scholarship funds is important so that students that come from low-income families, but academically are extremely bright have the opportunity to be here.” Dr. Newman's view indicates one where faculty expects low-income students to reach higher standards

than the general population of students in order to deserve access to the university. This view is troublesome given the myriad of academic issues that were related to a family's socioeconomic status, such as access to well-resourced K-12 schools.

Dr. Shawna Alkhatib, professor in physical sciences, shares Dr. Newman's view and specifies standardized test scores as the academic marker that low-income students must meet in order to receive scholarships dollars. However, unlike Dr. Newman who indicates a need of continuous fundraising and support for scholarship funding, Dr. Alkhatib believes that plenty of opportunities exist for "really good" students. She says, "Somebody who is probably not well off but has great scores and wants to come in, I think there are wonderful scholarships available. If you don't have money, they have scholarships for you if you're really good. What else can you ask for?" Dr. Alkhatib's view ignores the reality that many resources and activities associated with a strong academic preparation require financial resources that may be out of reach for low-income families. For instance, the qualifier for scholarships that Dr. Alkhatib references, standardized test scores also requires payment and has been shown to reflect bias based on socioeconomic status. Additionally, lower income students may experience reduced access to preparatory resources or be unable to take the test multiple times to improve their scores. However, perhaps most disconcerting is Dr. Alkhatib's opinion that there was little else that could be done to help low-income students in achieving access to higher education beyond what was already being done. This view is not in support of

initiatives to increase access or widen the range of students attending the university. It indicates a poor understanding of the issues facing today's students from low-income backgrounds and potential bias. Both Dr. Alkhatib and Newman's views also assume all students have the knowledge and resources, or cultural capital to seek out scholarships. In other words they view the "playing field" of higher education as the same for all students.

Dr. Regi Schmidt, professor of agricultural life sciences, said he was surprised by the number of opportunities available for low-income students and was most concerned with students from middle income families:

It's surprising to me about the number of opportunities still available today for low-income families. In some respects it's easiest for low-income students due to financial aid, grants and scholarships...it's the middle income that seems to be the most disadvantaged because in some respects they can't afford it, but yet they don't get the support to be able to afford it.

Dr. Schmidt's view is in part a reflection of his own experience as a lower income student, but he also cited a recent presentation he attended for a college access program where he learned about opportunities for low-income students. Dr. Schmidt's statement that "it's easiest for low-income students" may not be accurate, but his concern for students based on family financial background indicates an interest and some understanding of issues related to class and the financial barriers students face.

Dr. Schmidt's statement indicates concern for students beyond those in the lowest income bracket. His view also sets the stage for the next set of faculty perspectives that introduce issues that a range of students may face. Dr. Schmidt's view indicates an assumption that low-income students are not taking advantage of the opportunities they have access to and indicates an expectation that low-income students should be aware of the opportunities and have the tools they need to take advantage of these and gain access to the university. In other words, students should have the cultural capital to alleviate the financial barriers of college attendance.

On the other hand, Dr. Hank Jensen, professor of physical sciences, passionately expressed his opinion that scholarships and government funding should be awarded based on need only:

I think that there's still a focus on supporting demographics as opposed to supporting need. I really think that if you're emphasizing the ability for kids to go to college, I think financial support should be strictly based on a need basis...Applying it to any other type of a criterion, I think is being unfair and unjust to any kid who's coming from a low-income, poor situation.

Dr. Jensen is an advocate for first-generation and low-income students, but felt strongly that race and ethnicity should not be included in scholarship criteria. He cites fairness and being just as the rationale for supporting students from low-income families, a view

that reflects not only a public good mission but also embodies the land-grant philosophy of expanding opportunity and access.

For those scholarships that are not only need-based, Dr. Ingrid Velez, assistant professor in arts and humanities, identifies family socioeconomic status and their financial means as a barrier for students in applying to college and for scholarships. She also alludes to issues of family stability that are often a byproduct of socioeconomic status and have an effect on access:

There's the component of class. If you're looking at two applications, Candidate A and Candidate B, and Candidate A was able to travel abroad, was able to complete an internship, and was able to play a sport, and Candidate B didn't. Well, those things that are making this person more competitive cost money and presumes a stable home environment. Students that are coming from low-income families, or families where there's just one parent, or families where there's not an adult available are competing with the same persons who have opportunities available. So, access is complicated.

Dr. Velez compares students from lower income backgrounds to those who have more opportunities available to them due to financial resources and she indicates an understanding of the difficulty lower income students must face by competing on the same level as their more well to do peers. Dr. Velez is insightful as she identifies the significant role that extra-curricular activities play in gaining access and the connection



to family stability, income and cultural capital. Although she does not offer solutions to the predicament, her understanding and ability to provide a specific example of where low-income students may be disadvantaged are evident of an attitude in support of access and equal opportunity.

Dr. Omar Pacana, tenured professor in arts and humanities, identifies securing credit as a barrier to students attending college. While this situation could affect students from all classes, it is likely that those from lower income backgrounds are more significantly impacted due to having fewer options to secure other forms of funding. Dr. Pacana states, "Students basically have to get credit from banks. Sometimes their [family's] debt is huge and they are paralyzed by their parents, and by the financial institutions." Dr. Pacana is concerned that the family's ability to secure credit affects their student's opportunity to attend college. He also points to the financial institutions and banks as playing a role in limiting access. While there are many reasons why credit may be denied, Dr. Pacana cited family debt and later discussed his general concern with the increasing cost of attendance. This situation leaves students facing significant financial barriers as they must secure the funding needed to pay for educational costs and make up for lost wages. His view indicates an assumption that students from lower-income backgrounds will have to work harder to achieve access.

However, Dr. Alton Sanders, tenured professor in physical sciences, relies on his own experience when he secured loans to attend college and believes that it is easy for

students to forgo wages and to borrow money. He holds strong views about students and how much they should work. Dr. Sanders describes his view regarding loans in relation to his frustration with students working too much:

A pet peeve of mine is that (sigh) students feel like they have to work...I try to reason with these students that look, you're probably being paid minimum wage or not far above, you're delaying your graduation by one to two years and what are you getting for the delay? Two years of minimum wage and imperfect learning, because you have to work. I slowly encourage students to just borrow and focus full time on their education. I mean maybe 10 hours a week is not too bad. But these students I've met who spend 30-40 hours working, I think they're doing themselves a disservice. Administrators say, well, you don't understand that many students don't have the financial resources. But I thought it was easy to get student loans. I mean it was when I was a student.

There were many faculty members who shared Dr. Sanders' frustration with students working too much outside of the classroom. Some faculty members understood students needed to work and took a forgiving approach to how their classroom assignments were affected. However, most simply expressed frustration and had few solutions other than students should not work more than 10 to 20 hours a week. Dr. Sanders' view indicated insensitivity to students who needed to work and a potential bias towards these students. His view was unique in that he expected students to

borrow money in order to reduce the number of hours they work and to focus on their studies. Unlike Dr. Pacana who believed securing loans was difficult for students, Dr. Sanders thought it was “easy” and that it was a good solution for any student, regardless of background. It did not occur to Dr. Sanders that students may face barriers to securing credit and loans. Additionally, he admits to relying on information from 1960 when he attended college in his assessment of college costs. He acknowledges that he has been told that financial resources are an issue, but his own experience surpasses what he has been told. This situation is concerning since it indicates the challenges that universities must overcome in educating the faculty about today’s students and the reality that they face.

Dr. Gary Jobes, tenured professor in business, also cites issues with students working too much, but simply states that he wishes students’ families were wealthier to allow their children to focus on school, “Kids today are working so hard. They’re all working part time and it really hurts their education. I would try to encourage kids to be more like the Chinese and have their parents pay for all of it because there’s so much [to learn] inside and outside of the classroom.” Dr. Jobes further discussed how students at private schools had better grades and were more successful in their studies. He stated, “You have wealthier kids who aren’t working at private institutions...they’re not brighter and they’re not more socially conscious. I think they just don’t have to work.” Dr. Jobes did not consider family socioeconomic status as a determinant to issues of

access such as academic preparation or access to opportunities. The absence of this view may be an indication that Dr. Jobes does not fully understand the financial barriers students face. He also did not offer alternatives for students who were unable to rely on parents who could cover the full cost of attendance. Dr. Jobes believed that students who had to work were disadvantaged in comparison to their peers. Many faculty members shared this view and believed that students at MU worked more than students at peer institutions. Based on national data from the National Survey of Student Engagement, this assumption is inaccurate. Yet, this situation again illustrates how difficult it is to counter a long-held assumption among the faculty.

Some faculty participants reflected on their family's economic background and acknowledged the impact of class on their success. For instance, Dr. Laura O'Connor, assistant professor in arts and humanities, who said "I was extremely lucky in my path to college. I went to a good high school and my parents had enough money to pay for me to go to private school...like a silver spoon." Upon reflection of their own educational experience, many participants recounted stories about their parents' sacrifices, significant role models in their lives, and events or experiences that helped them determine their life goals. Overall, faculty participants commented on the good fortune that they had encountered due to their family background or experiences outside the family unit to reach their current status as a faculty member in academia and many were specific about their view that they felt privileged to do what they loved. Unlike Dr.

Jobs who held unrealistic expectations about a family's ability to pay for college, faculty who talked in this vein acknowledged that their situation may not be similar to the students they interact with. This understanding is important in how faculty members establish expectations, especially with regard to students working in part-time jobs.

As college costs increase, many of the issues that faculty participants cited become problematic for students from a range of socioeconomic statuses. Access to extra-curricular activities, ability to secure credit, the need to work, and family stability could affect students from all income brackets. Yet, these issues may present the most significant challenge for students from certain classes, such as lower income backgrounds. Often faculty expected students to exhibit the same cultural capital skills and knowledge regardless of class and expected students to pursue the same options for securing funding. These views did not take into consideration the role of family background in paying college costs and implied that faculty members have higher expectations for students from lower-income backgrounds to compete readily with their more well-off peers (in all areas).

The perspectives explored in this theme related to family background confirm the importance of cultural capital to securing access. They represent a significant finding further analyzed in Chapter Five.

## **Faculty Perceptions of Student Attitudes: Demonstrating a Desire to Learn is Essential for Success**

Faculty participants identified certain attitudes, feelings, beliefs and goals that students needed to possess and display once they had gained access to the university. The compilation of these attitudes appeared to affect who they believed deserved or did not deserve access to the university. There was general consensus among the faculty that students have a choice in attending college and in which courses they enroll, thus they should be motivated and engaged. They expected students to demonstrate a desire to attain a goal, specifically an educational goal of learning, and to be actively involved in their own education. They also expected students to be passionate, interested, curious, confident and independent and believed that these attitudes determined who would be successful at the university, and thus who should be receiving access. Through their descriptions of these attitudes and characteristics, faculty identified the following qualities of students with whom they particularly desired to work (and invest their time):

- Passion: interested, enthusiastic, energetic
- Motivated: driven, proactive, focused, engaged, persistent
- Confident: self-assured; outgoing; willing to initiate interactions, ask questions, seek help when necessary, take risks; unafraid; self-advocacy

- Independent: responsible, able to problem-solve, handle uncertainty, think for oneself, not viewing faculty as “The” authority, vigilant
- Curious: inquisitive, seeks answers to questions for the purpose of gaining knowledge, interested in learning
- Goal-Oriented: self-aware, self-driven, determined
- Committed: dedicated, invested, willing to make sacrifices and work hard, resilient

These attributes merit access to the university according to faculty and are further detailed below.

**Passion and motivation are demonstrated through time.**

Faculty participants easily articulated the need for students to be motivated and interested. Faculty often described these characteristics when discussing whom they preferred to work with and who should be in their classrooms. Some of the most interesting and representative perspectives are presented. However, most of the study’s 31 participants discussed motivation or passion in relation to student access and success.

Dr. Jack Tucker, an assistant professor in the arts and humanities, shared his expectations and why he believed his peers also shared this view, “We expect students to be really invested and proactive...It’s probably the same in every field. We’re all here as faculty to do research because we’re really excited about our thing, and so we kind of

expect students to have that same energy and enthusiasm.” Dr. Tucker admitted to being obsessed with his work, “I’m here seven days a week working on stuff because I can’t stop” and further stated that he gets frustrated by students who spend little time on his assignments and projects. Dr. Tucker was a pre-tenure faculty member and his passion and dedication were reflective of the demands in the tenure process and nature of academia. However, an expectation for students to display a similar drive may not relate well to the structure of undergraduate curriculum at a public land-grant institution. The expectation may also not take into consideration the many responsibilities students have and various time commitments in and outside the classroom. Regardless, students must negotiate faculty expectations and find ways to meet the various demands on their time and attention.

Dr. Hank Jensen, a tenured faculty member in the physical sciences shared Dr. Tucker’s expectation for students to display passion and interest, but provided insight into how faculty may help students negotiate faculty expectations. Dr. Jensen described how students secure positions in his laboratory:

They [students] have to make the initiative. They can speak to me about the opportunities and I’ll have a conversation with them. I lay out the benefits for them. But I tell them that there’s a cost to me in terms of having you join the group and I need to know that you’re truly dedicated, truly interested.



Outside of classroom assignments, students are also expected to take advantage of opportunities that lead to success, such as undergraduate research. Faculty members control many of these opportunities and determine who has access. Dr. Jensen cited dedication and interest as characteristics that help him determine who to give positions to in his laboratory. He continued by sharing the spiel that he gives prospective undergraduate researcher in order to provide prospective researchers with an accurate picture of his expectations:

I lay out the hard facts, the hard reality that science is hard. There are a lot of intrinsic failures before limited successes. And in order to be able to do that, you have to put in lots of time. You can't come here for 15 minutes on Tuesday and then pop in on Wednesday for half an hour, and so forth. You really have to have dedicated open blocks of time, two or three hours a couple of days a week. You also have to have enough time to come in and start setting things up. It takes a lot of time to get the experiment to actually work. And you're going to be working with a grad student, so you have to work with their particular schedule. If they're sitting here and I'm telling them all these hard facts, and they still say, "Yes, I'm willing to do this. This is what I want to do. I'm interested and excited about it." That's all that really matters. They really have to show to me that they're engaged. There's enthusiasm. That's all I really ask.

Dr. Jensen stated that he provides this information not to deter or scare students, but to provide students with a clear understanding of what they are asking to be a part of. His story offers insight into an approach by one faculty member in trying to help students navigate the institution by providing information about how to meet faculty expectations and emphasizing the need for passion in order to persist and succeed. Dr. Jensen was adamant that students who receive access to his laboratory must demonstrate initiative, enthusiasm and an interest and willingness to devote a significant amount of time to research. Like Dr. Tucker's expectation for students to spend ample time on assignments in his discipline of arts and humanities, Dr. Jensen expected students to commit a significant amount of time to research. In fact, the commitment of time provided evidence of students' passion and motivation and determined who Dr. Jensen provided opportunities to in his physical science lab.

Whereas Dr. Jensen took an approach that explained expectations to students and framed why certain attitudes were important, Dr. Quincy Anderson, an assistant professor in the agricultural life sciences, revels in his situation where he does not have to deal with students who are unmotivated or disinterested, "I'm very fortunate that most of the teaching and engagement I have is with students who are in a specialized minor and who are far along in their programs. The students I'm involved with are fairly engaged...they're not just showing up." Dr. Anderson views his situation as lucky because his discipline is a small, specialized field. His aloofness to younger students or

those who are less directed (“just showing up”) assumes students who are further along in their programs are more likely to devote time to their studies and underscores the importance that faculty place on certain behaviors and attitudes. It also reflects a bias regarding the types of students that faculty prefer to work with. Without realizing it, students signal to faculty that they deserve to be at the institution through their attitudes and associated behaviors.

Another faculty member, Dr. Barry Green, a tenured professor in agricultural life sciences shared multiple student stories and experiences based on his tenure of 32 years at MU. One particularly meaningful story challenged his approach to working with students and gave him a slightly different perspective on student motivation:

This one goes back probably at least 15 years: I had a student who was just barely hanging on academically. I’m pretty sure he was on academic dismissal for a couple a terms. Then would come back, and was on dismissal again. I had pretty much given up on him and didn’t think he’d ever really be able to finish. But he was the kind who would never quite seem to let go entirely and finally he graduated with a 2.00001. It was just absolutely sheer persistence. And, quite honestly, I had given up on him. I’m glad that he didn’t.

Dr. Green continued:

I found out later through one of our other faculty members that he had been involved in a serious boating accident as a kid. Both parents had been killed. He

had been seriously injured and it was a brain injury, which was why he couldn't perform at the level that other students did. In retrospect that made me much more – understanding isn't quite the word, but much more willing to be flexible in giving students the okay to pace themselves. It doesn't mean that I tolerate slacking, because I really don't tolerate slacking very well. But, I think I'm a little less quick to judge why a student doesn't quite seem to have the motivation or perform in a way that I might expect.

After Dr. Green told a few more stories, he concluded, "It's the same sort of thing, don't give up on people. I keep hitting myself upside of the head with that because sometimes the tendency is just to go, ah, they don't belong here." Dr. Green's experience points to a predisposition on the part of faculty to judge a student's worthiness of attending the institution based on the ability for students to meet certain expectations, some of which may be misguided or ill informed. His experiences also suggest that an assumption that time is the way that students demonstrate passion and motivation may be short-sighted in certain situations. Like Dr. Green mentions, he continues to have to remind himself to not succumb to his first instinct and to allow for flexibility in how students meet his expectations.

Dr. Green's experience is important in unearthing and conceptualizing the frame that faculty members begin with and what it means for student access. Dr. Green has a long tenure in working with students and still reminds himself to be less quick to judge.

Dr. Green also acknowledged that there are instances where students do not belong at the institution, but stated he believed in providing opportunities to a large range of students. Other faculty who do not share this core belief or those with fewer years of experience may struggle to work with students who fail to meet expectations.

Additionally, as evident by participants in this study, some faculty may not permit access to certain opportunities (e.g. undergraduate research) to students who appear unmotivated and are unable to commit a significant amount of time. Furthermore, faculty may avoid interactions with groups of students that they believe are most likely to be unable to exhibit these characteristics, such as underclassmen. It is possible that this bias could extend to other groups, depending on the faculty member's preconceived notions.

The views regarding passion and motivation begin to illustrate the nuances of the college access puzzle in the sense that faculty provide access to certain opportunities based on these preconceived notions of these attitudes. While faculty members easily identified passion and motivation, they were less likely to directly specify other attitudes explicitly, such as confidence. However, while they may not have always used the word confidence, the expectation for students to display confidence and independence became readily evident.

**Students need to take charge of their education.**

Students demonstrated taking charge of their education through certain behaviors that exhibited attitudes of confidence and independence. Faculty discussed the need for students to ask questions, seek out help, navigate the college campus, and take control of their own education. Faculty expected students to know what they needed and to be self-assured enough to seek out answers. These activities all require self-confidence. For faculty participants, displaying confidence and independence was one way in which students embodied college readiness and demonstrated engagement. In this subtheme, some faculty participants also reflected upon their own experiences, citing the significant role self-confidence and self-advocacy played in their own educational paths.

Professor Omar Pacana, a tenured faculty member in the arts and humanities, shared his personal story of his educational path and discussed how he was able to relate to students from similar backgrounds. Dr. Pacana talked about the importance of being confident in order to access higher education and claimed upholding this belief was especially critical for students from first-generation backgrounds, like himself:

You cannot say that people in the working class don't do it [attend college] because they don't want to do it. No, it's extremely complicated. For instance before I went to the university, I thought only intelligent people went to

university, but that's not the case. Number one is you. You avail you. It has nothing to do with your mind. It has to do with how you feel [about yourself].

Dr. Pacana passionately described the importance of students believing in themselves by sharing his personal experience. He expected students at the university to exemplify a similar belief in themselves, and connected confidence to a student's ability to take charge of their education. Taking charge of one's education was often described by faculty as students knowing what they wanted to do or taking the steps to figure out what they wanted to do. While these behaviors are recognized in the literature as important to student success, faculty members also connected them to being important in securing access to the university.

Dr. Mae Lockett reaffirmed the notion that self-assurance is critical to one's educational path, "I think that people should be self-driven at the high school level even, but certainly in higher education. If you're not in charge of your own education, you're at the mercy of others." Dr. Lockett's perspective was a remnant of her personal experience and her fight to gain access to math courses once in college in order to remedy a deficiency from her high school preparation. She keenly described the challenges she faced as a female in college during the 1960s and credited her success as a result of "pure stubbornness and vigilance." Dr. Lockett emphasized her expectations for students stating, "Scientists are supposed to be curious. We're supposed to be problem solvers. I just value independence in a student." These characteristics played a

significant role in Dr. Lockett's success and as a result she expects students to have the ability to demonstrate similar behaviors. Her view suggests that independence was a linchpin and key to success. How students learn and their capacity for demonstrating independence is unclear but few faculty participants viewed themselves in supporting students' development of this characteristic.

It was unmistakable that faculty expected to see evidence of self-advocacy among students, which indicates that students were driven and taking their education seriously. Yet, it is likely that taking charge of one's educational path looks different for different students and is demonstrated in a variety of ways, as it was for Drs. Pacana and Lockett. It is important for students to recognize that certain activities demonstrate self-confidence and to understand the significant role confidence plays in access and ultimately, success.

Dr. Dag Aguilar, an associate professor in the physical sciences, believed students had to be "self-motivated and directed...focused and dedicated to the science" in order to succeed. Dr. Aguilar described his experience in working with undergraduates and identified several behaviors that demonstrate confidence.

I advise undergrads, but I can't really hold their hand all the time. They have to be able to face some essentially open-ended questions and try to figure it out on their own...They also have to be able to ask questions. Some people are too proud or shy or whatever it is. They'll just get stuck for like weeks on end, in



some kind a dead end. If they don't reach out and ask questions, that's a problem.

Dr. Aguilar identified an ability to face uncertainty, explore uncertainty and ask questions at the appropriate time as behaviors important to student success in college. Each of these activities requires some level of self-assurance, as well as an awareness regarding the expectations of the faculty. Dr. Aguilar's expectation that students figure out problems on their own suggests that he values independence. However, he also expects students to not be too independent or stuck for weeks on a problem and to ask for help at an appropriate time. Similarly, Dr. Aguilar mentioned the delineation of students either being too shy or too proud, which further indicates that there is an appropriate or "preferred" level of confidence that students should exhibit. The subjective nature of faculty expectations such as these may disadvantage those students who are less savvy about the academy culture and norms. On the other hand, they may also advantage certain students.

Furthermore, Dr. Aguilar's view suggests that faculty expect students to take charge of their education by approaching faculty and does not consider that the reverse interaction could also take place and be effective. In other words, Dr. Aguilar did not consider the importance of his role in reaching out to students in order to facilitate and foster the attitudes and skills that he expected. In fact very few faculty participants in this study discussed experiences or interactions that were initiated by the faculty

member him or herself. In most instances, faculty members described experiences where a student approached them and the positive outcomes associated with the interaction. For the two faculty members who shared stories of reaching out to students, both occurred as the result of feeling connected to certain students based on demographic characteristics. Dr. Yoshi Okimi, a pre-tenured faculty member in social sciences, described her intentional outreach efforts for international students:

I have Asian origin and whenever I have some students from other countries in my class, well, usually I have like all female European American students in my class. But sometimes I have students from other countries and then I tend to ask questions to them, like are you on track, and are you doing okay with the assignment. I try to ask those questions to students who I think may need more support.

Dr. Okimi identified students that she thought may need more support based on her personal experience of being an international student at an American university. She maintained expectations for students to perform at a high-level and to take responsibility for their own education, but allowed for the possibility that she could help students by reaching out to them. Dr. Sue Jones, associate professor in arts and humanities shared a similar perspective and was deliberate about her outreach efforts for students of color and those she knew who were first-generation students. Dr. Jones' role in the department on a scholarship committee also helped to initiate these

interactions as she was often looking for students that met certain scholarship criteria. These limited examples of faculty-led outreach is concerning given the importance of faculty-student interactions in students' access to opportunities and success.

Introductions through a colleague or friend were another way that faculty-student interactions occurred without the student or faculty member initiating the experience. Dr. Sara Alto, associate professor in the physical sciences, talked about an "unusual situation" where she provided an opportunity to a freshman to work in her lab based on her demeanor. She stated that she normally reserves these positions for upperclassmen, or advanced sophomores, but said, "I have a young woman who's a freshman. I think she'll be fantastic. She's really enthusiastic and she's not afraid." The student's ability to demonstrate not only passion but confidence secured her access to a unique opportunity. Dr. Alto quantified confidence as being unafraid which was ambiguous but meaningful. She never referenced the student's academic preparation, but later mentioned that she knew the student's father. While the network and this relationship was likely important in the student securing a position in the lab, it did not diminish Dr. Alto's genuine interest in working with the student. It does suggest that interactions facilitated by colleagues or friends are acceptable by the faculty and even favored over reaching out to students themselves. Dr. Alto's story of her freshmen researcher exemplifies the importance confidence and enthusiasm play in accessing

college and key opportunities and sheds light on the cultural capital assumptions that faculty hold.

Through his reflection about one of his most memorable students, Dr. Chad Roof, assistant professor in the agricultural life sciences, discussed several student attributes that he believed were critical to success and also emphasized being unafraid, “She’s always thinking about the future and planning. She’s very good at planning and keeping organized. She is socially outgoing, and intellectually she’s inquisitive. She likes to learn and she likes to ask questions. She’s not afraid to ask questions. I think that’s a big one.” He continued in a more general discussion regarding his expectations for students, “They need to be persistent, be motivated, self-motivated and responsible. They need to know when to speak up, ask questions, know when to ask for help, and not be afraid to do that. Or if they’re afraid to do that, overcome that.” Dr. Roof listed many characteristics, but emphasized the importance of asking questions. Like Dr. Aguilar, Dr. Roof indicated that there is an *appropriate* or *right* time to ask questions. Dr. Roof also simply stated that students who were afraid to ask questions should simply “overcome that.” The manner in which he makes this statement makes it seem like gaining self-confidence is as easy as flipping a switch. This stance may indicate a lack of sensitivity to certain students (i.e., where would students learn to ask the questions they need to ask?), an unawareness of the challenges some students face, and indifference to the complexity of student access and success issues. The next set of

faculty perspectives considers how the university may help students take control of their education.

Dr. Susana Milovich, a tenured faculty member in the arts and humanities, shared her opinion about important university activities and how the university could help students gain confidence, “All those camps are so important, but not only for recruitment to raise the numbers, an egotistic point-of-view, but also as a passage [for students]. Even if the kids go and enroll in a different university, to see how any generic university looks can allow them to feel empowered.” Dr. Milovich frequently works with immigrant families in her role and understands how unfamiliar and overwhelming a large university might seem to some students and their families. Dr. Milovich frames confidence as empowerment, which is usually used in reference to marginalized groups. This slightly altered outlook recognizes that self-confidence is related to experiences, situations, opportunities and chances to develop confidence and that it could happen at the institutional level.

Dr. Laura O’Connor, a pre-tenured faculty member in the arts and humanities, recalled an experience when she worked with all first-generation students in her classroom at a previous institution, “They were surprisingly open-minded individuals. Their eagerness to take risks when they were working was unusual. Their sort of willingness to dive right in and to take chances and risk failure was memorable.” Dr. O’Connor tried to make sense of the students’ success on assignments in comparison to

the population of students she works with at MU, which has fewer first-generation students, “Whether these students [at my first institution] simply didn’t know the tradition or the medium was so new to them, they were willing to take risks. They were individualistic in their attitudes. They just kind of went for it...and it’s what gave them their success.” Dr. O’Connor’s experience suggests that in some areas, like with the assignment she had given her students, inexperience and unfamiliarity with expectations is beneficial for students. She identified the ability to take risks and “jump in” as behaviors that led to success. These behaviors are also related to aspects of self-confidence and independence on the part of students and required little effort on the part of the faculty member to instill or support.

Regardless of how faculty experienced or understood confidence, many referenced self-confidence as an important factor for student success. Confidence also played a role in securing access to certain opportunities on campus because faculty did not view themselves as playing a role in reaching out to students to facilitate access to opportunities. Thus, confidence is ultimately connected to gaining access to postsecondary education and opportunities once on campus. Embodying confidence allowed students to not only demonstrate a desire to learn but to enact it through their behavior. The next sub-theme is educational goals, which underlays motivation, commitment, interest, and even confidence.

**Students should commit to an educational goal (beyond securing a credential) and work hard to achieve it.**

Faculty connected student attitudes and motivation to the reasons why students were attending college. Many faculty members were frustrated by those students who had not have identified educational goals. They were equally as frustrated with the effects of the movement to a credentialed society, or what seemed to be students who were only interested in securing a degree as described in an analysis of the public good mission. Instead, faculty expected students to demonstrate a true passion, interest and curiosity about learning. They expected to see evidence of these attitudes through behaviors like seeking out opportunities and asking questions and through the time students were willing to commit to assignments and activities, such as research. The faculty expected students to understand that learning was what a college education was all about and to approach their studies with this intent. There was variety in how faculty participants described students' educational goals and the merit in which they gave different goals. Yet, in general the faculty believed students approaching their education as a learning opportunity with a defined educational goal were those who demonstrated the attributes of a good student and who deserved access to high education.

Dr. Dag Aguilar, a tenured physical scientist in the study stated, "I don't have a whole lot of tolerance for slackers, or people who are confused about why they should be going to college and all this. You need to come here [with the view that] your job is

to be a student...and you need to take it seriously.” Dr. Aguilar connected “slacking” with the absence of an educational goal or confusion about their goals. He later discussed giving students who lacked goals a “stern talking to” in an effort to try to encourage them to “figure it out.” Like many faculty participants, Dr. Aguilar expected students to have clear educational goals and for students to take their work seriously, similar to a job. Students who are unaware about the significance of having a goal, what it represents to faculty, and its relationship to their behaviors and attitudes may be disadvantaged in securing access to higher education and to the opportunities once on campus. It is evident that the faculty prefers to work with students who demonstrate certain behaviors and was more adamantly described by Dr. Anderson.

Dr. Quincy Anderson, a pre-tenured faculty member in the agricultural life sciences, considered himself lucky to interact with upperclassmen and continued to shed light on the importance of student attitudes and their educational goals by describing the experiences of his departmental colleagues, “I certainly hear some horror stories from colleagues about dealing with undergraduates, freshmen and sophomores who just haven’t really figured out what they want to do in life.” Dr. Anderson’s statement unveils the fervor of faculty views on the necessity to have a goal and alludes to behaviors of faculty to avoid working with students who lack direction. Dr. Anderson further attributed students’ lack of a goal on the shift in focus within the academy to the credential versus on learning, “They [the students] have this general idea of well, I have



to get through university before I can do whatever it is that I want to do. This just doesn't seem very healthy all around." Dr. Anderson's perspective identifies that what a student's goal also matters to faculty. He assumed that students who should be allowed access were motivated and goal-oriented and viewed the sole focus of earning a degree as insufficient, misdirected and problematic for both students and faculty.

Dr. Oscar Pacana, professor in arts and humanities, had an alternative view to the credentialing issue, pointing out that there were practical aspects of a degree, especially for certain populations. Dr. Pacana did not diminish an educational goal of earning a degree, but pointed out that students needed to want more than the degree to reap the benefits of a college education. He also thought that students who wanted more than only the degree were likely to be more successful. Dr. Pacana stated:

If you go to the university only to get a degree, that's not the important part. It is important because you have to be practical when you are poor though. But if you want to improve yourself and your chances, if you want to know more, you need more than a degree. You need to see things. You need a lot of things. You need to have critical thinking, real critical thinking, which is not the shit we were talking about.

Dr. Pacana spoke with passion about the tools and skills students needed to seek "real" advancement in society, yet he understood the reality and necessity of the degree to some students and their families. Dr. Pacana believed that students from lower income

backgrounds may be required to place more value on obtaining the credential due to their family's financial situation. He framed the ability to solely focus on the learning as a luxury but one of significant importance in degree attainment and in improving one's life. This view indicates an understanding about the range of students attending the university, openness to accepting a wide range of students, and an ability to calibrate expectations based on student's background.

Dr. Mae Lockett, a tenured physical scientist also viewed learning as the best and ultimate reason for attending college, but similar to Dr. Pacana had an open mind to the variety of student goals she encountered, "I think people should go to college with the idea of learning more in a specific area, so that they can be better at something—be better in their career, be a better mom, be a better...whatever their goal is in life." From Dr. Lockett's perspective, the most important factor for student access to higher education is having a goal and pursuing it with vigor. Her willingness to consider multiple goals, each worthy of pursuit also indicates an inclusive position which is important when working with a wide range of students.

In general faculty participants spoke similarly about the need for students to have educational goals and to demonstrate commitment and responsibility. While there was variety in faculty opinions regarding which behaviors were linked to certain goals and a range in level of tolerance for students with or without goals, there was consensus that goals were important to student success and access to college. Defined educational

goals and demonstrating a desire to learn is absent from the college access literature.

This is an important finding of the study that is discussed further in Chapter Five.

Finally, Dr. Tim Yount, a first-generation, pre-tenured faculty member in the social sciences shared a personal experience from his undergraduate career, which encapsulated the importance of evoking a desire to learn:

I had a professor pull me aside and say, “You do a really good job. Have you thought about academia?” I said, “Oh, I’m not smart enough for that,” which I legitimately believed. I am not very smart in terms of brain smart. The professor laughed and I thought that was a really weird response. But he said that [being smart] doesn’t have anything to do with success in academics. He said, “You love to learn. You love to figure things out and you work hard.”

Dr. Yount went on to graduate school and successfully secured a faculty position at a Research I institution. He credited many of the faculty he met in his undergraduate program for helping him realize opportunities, solidify his goals, and give him the confidence to pursue his dreams. Without knowing it, Dr. Yount was signaling to this faculty member that he had a true desire to learn through his attitudes and working hard. Like Dr. Yount there are students who do not realize what is needed to succeed in academia and yet, they stumble upon good faculty members who reach out to them. However, there are others who may never have the benefit of a good mentor or a faculty member reaching out to them to encourage potential. Based upon the findings

of this study, access to opportunities and a strong mentoring relationship is highly dependent upon the student initiating the interactions with faculty.

The faculty views of student attitudes and behaviors indicate that a simple desire to learn is highly valued in educational settings and is the most acceptable goal of attending college. A student's desire to learn and consequently their confidence, passion, motivation, commitment, curiosity, independence and ability to take control of their education effects access to the university, as well as access to certain opportunities once on campus. Students likely do not realize the importance of demonstrating these attributes and could disadvantage themselves unknowingly. Faculty views in this study did not allow for the possibility that students may not grasp the importance of demonstrating these characteristics and for faculty playing a role in the development of these skills. This finding is further analyzed in a discussion of cultural capital in Chapter Five.

### **Conclusion**

Conversations about the purpose and mission of postsecondary education and faculty members' experiences with students vis-à-vis their own experiences provided an information rich case on access. Many faculty members were genuinely thankful to have had the conversation about access and commented that conversations about access should happen more frequently. Understanding the different beliefs and the ways in which faculty members approach access is important to improving college access and to

positioning outreach efforts for faculty buy-in. Implications, conclusions and suggestions for additional research are further described and presented in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides empirical evidence about faculty perceptions regarding issues surrounding student access to postsecondary education. Through the discovery of faculty views, a more complete understanding of the access puzzle was possible. Qualitative methods grounded in the case study tradition allowed for in-depth inquiry and closeness to both context and individual experiences, ideal for studying the complex issue of student access and for conceptualizing faculty views. Thirty-one tenured or tenure-track faculty members from one, large, public, land-grant institution participated in semi-structured interviews. The coding of participant interview transcripts determined themes, corroborated by observation and document analysis. The written narrative report of the findings was finalized following consideration and application of participant comments. The prior chapter featured the results, set forth in two structural sections, a public good for whom and access for whom.

This chapter is a continued examination of the study findings. It includes a summary of the study and a discussion of findings incorporating literature to make connections, illustrate parallels and illuminate differences. Following the discussion, findings of the study are summarized and reconsidered in a group of tables and figures that connect to the theoretical frameworks guiding this study. These express the essential features of the faculty perspectives related to access and serve as a prelude to

the study's conclusions. This research report ends with recommendations regarding access, for faculty and administrators, and for future research.

### **Summary of the Study**

In this section, the study is reviewed through reiteration of its background and rationale; research problem and question; paradigm; study participants and data collection; analysis procedure; and, findings. This study assumes that access is a problem and that the opportunity to participate in higher education should be expanded and increased. The theoretical considerations allow for an investigation of what is happening (academic capitalism), why it is happening (two-good framework), and how the actors, or faculty members, can play a role in access (academic capital formation). The theories position the study and permit analysis of findings in well-established conceptual ideals.

#### **Research Problem and Paradigm**

Open access to higher education is rooted in notions that education is a public good that benefits all of society and should be encouraged for the broadest population possible. This belief implies that institutions of higher education and their faculties value knowledge and scientific discovery as public goods to which the "citizenry has claims" for the public benefit and that students regardless of background deserves an opportunity to pursue postsecondary education (Slaughter & Rhoads, 2004; St. John, 2003). This conviction has been exemplified by public policymakers who have long supported education as a means for economic development and as a necessity for a

strong democracy as seen through a myriad of initiatives, such as the Pell Grant Program, established in 1972 to provide need-based aid and equip students to attend a college of their choice (Hossler, Schmit & Vesper, 1998). However, this commitment to access and the public good mission has been called into question amidst a troublesome economy, changing political landscape, and unprecedented demands on institutional resources (Couturier, 2006; Jones & Wellman, 2010; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; St. John et al., 2011; Weisbrod et al., 2008). This situation has been exacerbated by the increasing cost of education, and as a result, the increased expectations of students and their families. In addition there have been significant changes in the faculty's work and role alongside the public's calls for accountability and measures of productivity. In sum, a convergence of trends has challenged the ability for public policy makers to make progress on alleviating the opportunity gap and for institutions to maintain their commitment to access (Couturier, 2006). The purpose of this paper is to examine issues related to student access amidst the current environment of competing demands at a predominately White, Midwestern land-grant, research extensive institution. This problem is investigated from the perspective of an overlooked stakeholder group in the literature on access, tenured and tenure-track faculty.

The study uses a qualitative case study approach to fully understand faculty perspectives within the context that they are embedded. The strength of case study research is the ability to holistically investigate an issue and thus present the multiple



views and realities of the phenomenon (Stake, 1995). Aligned with the postmodern perspective, I viewed the interview as a conversation in which the data arose in an “interpersonal relationship, coauthored and coproduced by interviewer and interviewee” (Kvale, 1996, p. 159).

### **Study Participants and Data Collection**

The study follows the case study tradition where a single institution was purposively selected as an instrumental case (Stake, 1995) and served as the research site. Participants were purposefully selected based on criterion, maximum variation, and stratified purposeful sampling strategies (Creswell, 2007). Individual participants were selected based upon criterion such as tenured or tenure-track faculty with a minimum of two years of service at the institution. Participants also needed to have taught undergraduates in the last two years and faculty members holding a significant administrative appointment, such as chair or vice chair were eliminated from consideration. I strived to achieve a stratified sample with regard to discipline, educational background, years of service, apportionment, age, gender, and race/ethnicity. A total of 31 faculty members participated in the study from 14 different departments. It was noteworthy that one third of participants self-identified as first-generation college graduate. In addition, the average age and years of service for participants was below the average of the institution as a whole.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant. Interviews were 30-120 minutes in length and only one interview was conducted per participant. As Creswell (2007) suggests, interview questions were based upon the central phenomenon under investigation and the secondary questions of the study. The theoretical frameworks were also especially important in shaping the protocol and ensuring that the full scope of the access puzzle was addressed. These addressed participants' perspectives, choices, opinions, knowledge, and experiences. The protocol continued to evolve during the data collection process (Merriam, 2009).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis began with the first pieces of data collected and morphed and intensified as more data was collected. Stake (1995) characterizes data analysis in case studies as an art, an intuitive process to search for meaning. In this case study, Glaser and Strauss's constant comparative method was utilized as a method of managing the large volume of data collected (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), as was Neumann's (2009) method of asking an analytic question of the data. Based on the early in vivo codes, I asked the question: what does a faculty member say about access? From this question, I began to identify patterns and regularities in the data (Creswell, 2007) which I noted in the skeleton of an analysis outline. The overall goal was to identify patterns and arrange the categories in relation to other categories (Merriam, 2009).

True to the constant comparative method, I reflected and discussed the emerging patterns with peer reviewers while being mindful to authentically consider the new data. I then compiled the categories into larger themes, linking the categories together in meaningful ways (Merriam, 2009). Finally, I comprehensively reviewed the sections of text within each theme for continuity and developed the narrative structure and description.

### **Findings**

Three overarching findings guide the discussion of results and a fourth addresses the theoretical consideration. These major findings include:

1. The faculty believes in the ideals of the public good mission and has an interest in upholding the values of institutional and public good missions in its work.
2. The faculty does not view itself as an actor in access and as a result is out-of-touch with how its role influences student access and success.
3. The faculty expects students to demonstrate a certain cultural capital and rewards students who demonstrate these skills, behaviors and knowledge; however, faculty expectations are often unclear and hidden from students.
4. Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "field" is critically important to the full understanding of nuances in the access puzzle; thus, it is prudent that St. John (2012) is considering the importance of "field" in his reconceptualization of academic capital formation.

## Discussion

The major thematic organization of this discussion reflects that of Chapter Two, with two exceptions. The literature regarding faculty culture is interwoven within the larger discussion items, as well as the connections to the two theoretical frameworks of academic capitalism and the two-good framework. These adjustments reflect the significance of faculty culture, the complex nature of the study with regard to the larger landscape of higher education, and context of how issues of access were discussed. In addition, throughout the study it became evident that the third theoretical framework, academic capital formation was most closely tied to the issues faculty identified such as cultural capital. Yet, many aspects that were discussed were also missing from the framework. These outcomes merited a more in-depth discussion of academic capital formation. Finally, there is some divergence from Chapter Two in the discussion of access because faculty members rarely discussed issues of college choice, a major way in which access has historically been studied. Instead issues related to cultural capital, student success, and degree attainment are more prevalent in the discussion.

The discussion begins with a look at the setting of the case including how faculty described the landscape of higher education, including the major finding related to the notion of the public good mission. This is followed by considerations of the faculty role and issues more directly tied to student access. The major finding here is that faculty do not view themselves as actors in access, yet certain cultural capital is expected and

rewarded by the faculty. In other words, faculty expect students to exhibit particular behaviors and reward students based upon these by granting access to certain opportunities, but students may not know what these behaviors are. This presents a challenge to student access and success. The section is concluded with a discussion of academic capital formation.

### **Landscape of Higher Education**

In this section, I focus on the following findings:

1. The faculty believes that the institution's responsibility to the state effects how the institutional mission should be fulfilled.
2. The institution has a responsibility to provide an affordable and accessible university exists.
3. The faculty views admissions standards as reflective of the institutional mission.
4. The faculty believes in the public good mission and desires to uphold the values resonate with that mission.
5. The faculty has experienced a movement to a credential environment among students which presents a challenge to their efforts to uphold the public good mission.

Amidst calls to obtain the "big goal" – to build a stronger nation through achievement of higher education (Lumina Foundation for Education, 2009), expand

access to an ever wider group of students (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 1998), and for faculty to reengage on student outcomes such as learning and quality (Newman, 2009), colleges and universities have also been forced to manage a “new normal” (Couturier, 2006). In other words, while institutions attempt to fulfill responsibilities tied to their missions and role in society, they are also distracted by a focus on revenue-generation, prestige and rankings (Weisbrod et al., 2008). As result of the conditions on college campuses, faculty also experience pressure to secure more external funding, fulfill multiple roles and compete at a higher level. This situation of competing demands and limited resources sets the stage in which issues of student access and success are positioned nationally and locally at Midwestern University.

Furthermore, the increasing tenuous institutional landscape and changing expectations for faculty are combined with a more general shift in public policy that has positioned education as more of a private-good versus public-good (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Weisbrod et al., 2008; St. John et al., 2011). The findings from this study support these notions and reflect the difficulty universities face in coping with the current landscape and competing demands. However, because earlier studies have not empirically examined faculty views, this study reveals a new understanding regarding the complicated nature of fulfilling the institutional and public mission given the current fiscal and political climate, in particular due to the day-to-day responsibilities required

by the faculty. The findings related to institutional mission and the public good mission provided the context in which this case was explored.

**Institutional mission and responsibility to the state.**

Institutional mission was very important to the faculty members in this study. Beyond simply stating teaching, research and service, most faculty members proudly cited the land-grant mission ideals and referenced the university's responsibility to the state in discussions regarding MU's mission. In response to a question about how he would define the missions of MU, Barry Green said he wished he could repeat language from the Morrill Act. Kami Kelly emphasized that the university community needed to be thankful for the benefits that were provided by the state, saying "even the ground we're standing on, literally." These were the ways in which faculty framed the importance of mission for themselves and to the institution.

The senior faculty in the study talked the most passionately about needing to meet the institution's responsibility to state and uphold institutional values. Others who were a little less zealous often admitted that they were not as familiar with the mission as they should be. This was the case for some of the newest pre-tenured faculty members who participated in the study. Sometimes faculty members acknowledged that they knew and understood more about their departmental mission versus the university mission. This difference reflects the importance of seniority and disciplinary

home among the faculty when considering the “field” in which faculty members understand university priorities and initiatives.

Although faculty members identified teaching, research and service as the core missions of the university and talked passionately about the mission and commitment to the state, the larger finding suggests that the faculty may not have understood or considered the day-to-day responsibility in carrying out the mission. For example, statements about providing an affordable and accessible university were rooted in institutional values, mission and responsibility, but vague about how this provision is maintained and which students might or might not be impacted. The finding suggests that while faculty could parrot back language found in mission statements, when day-to-day responsibilities for carrying out the mission were discussed, there was less assurance on the part of the faculty for whose role and responsibility it was. This finding is broadly supported in the literature where Morphew and Hartley (2006) concluded that mission statements were used to communicate, more than just legitimize and were not meaningless; however, they were also rarely used in college and university strategic planning or prioritization. When specificity was discussed, such as how the university provided an affordable and accessible university or structured admissions standards to allow access to wide-range of students, there was far less consensus and understanding among the faculty in comparison to the general discussion regarding mission. Yet, there was an overall consensus that the university was meeting its institutional mission and



fulfilling its commitment to the state. In addition, the faculty believed that university's admissions standards were reflective of the mission and responsibility to the state.

Although faculty members were in touch with the mission of the institution, some were savvier than others regarding the pressure and need to increase revenues. Faculty expressed frustration with issues related to resources, but did not connect the pursuit of revenue to the ability to fulfill the institutional mission. For instance, Dag Aguilar expressed concern with an institutional decision to recruit more international students saying that the extra revenue was not worth the negative effect on the classroom experience for domestic students. His colleague, Sara Alto also discussed the institutional goals but was more concerned with the quality of the academic profiles of the students the institution planned to admit in order to reach enrollment goals. These faculty members were frustrated by the potential outcomes that they would have to cope with as a result of pursuing revenue and growth. Neither saw the need or benefit of these actions in facilitating the institutional mission. While Weisbrod and associates (2008) did not specify outcomes for faculty, they did acknowledge that pursuing revenue could be a "double-edged sword." These examples of faculty concern support the literature in that the pursuit of revenue is not only challenging, but can be perceived negatively and misunderstood. The findings also extend the literature by providing specificity to what the faculty experiences as a result of the landscape facing colleges and universities.

Furthermore, faculty members expressed contradictory opinions about mission and what they believed the priorities should be when asked to be specific about issues related to access. For example, faculty discussed increasing the university's academic reputation, but later cited frustration with eliminating certain students based upon academic markers. Others discussed a priority of providing an accessible university to a large group of students, but then also cited poor preparation as an "unfortunate circumstance" of a large, public institution. This finding suggests that faculty were interested in providing open access to a large range of students but only if they did not have to work with these students and if the other institutional goals such as reputation were not affected. These contradictions suggest that once the outcomes were realized by prioritizing one goal over another, faculty may have been surprised by – and less supportive of – expanding access and the dangers of certain decisions. This finding also suggests that multiple views about priorities exist on college campuses and that consensus about the collective goals or work of the faculty would be difficult to achieve. KerryAnn O'Meara (2012) called for guidance and delineation of the faculty's collective work in order to move universities forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The findings from this study agree with O'Meara's suggestion that the faculty needs a clearer understanding about institutional priorities and guidance regarding the impact of their work.

Further related to the issue of accessibility and affordability, it is possible that making improvements in these areas has never been more difficult given the local and

national circumstances and tension and pressures at all levels. This was evident by the faculty who passionately discussed the land-grant mission and commitment to educate students, while seeming less than hopeful in fulfilling a truly open-access mission. This sentiment was expressed by faculty members across discipline group, gender, race, rank, and age. Instead many participants focused on providing an accessible and affordable university but were less specific about what this looked like for certain groups of students. In other words, it was not clear who was included or excluded when faculty members were discussing accessibility and affordability.

Some respondents recognized the differences among student groups with regard to accessibility and affordability. This was especially true for faculty members in the agricultural life sciences who viewed themselves as advocates for students and families from rural parts of the state. However, most faculty members made blanket statements about access without consideration for the variety of student and family backgrounds. Likewise, there was a group of faculty participants who was quite disinterested in an access mission and who believed that access was a nonissue. Again, there was no one discipline or other characteristic of those faculty members in this group. Tierney (1999) stated, "Whereas equity and access were once cornerstones of academe, there is no longer widespread support for this belief" (p. 5). Although Tierney did not specify who he was referencing in this statement, the findings from this study support the notion

that belief in and commitment to an access mission can no longer be assumed across the board, even among university faculty.

A fundamental ideal of the two-good framework which guided this study was that the mission of higher education could not be accomplished without funding, thus funding must always be pursued (Weisbrod et al., 2008). Yet, this framework did not consider faculty perspectives of what was happening on college campuses and the impact of their choices and work on pursuit of the revenue-good and mission-good. Few members of the faculty connected what fulfilling one priority meant for others or understood the realities and interplay of mission and revenue on what was happening with regard to student access. These findings support Weisbrod et al.'s (2008) framework in an analysis of the landscape, but suggest that those carrying out the day-to-day responsibilities and interacting with students have a limited understanding. An implication of this finding is that those faculty members outside the discipline of education may be disadvantaged in their work due to a lack of awareness of the important complexities of the landscape in which they work and conceptualization of the impact of their work on student access. They may assume that they are fulfilling the institutional mission and commitment to the state without realizing the effects of their beliefs, preconceived notions and interactions.

**Public good mission.**

In their examination of academic capitalism, Slaughter and Rhoades concluded that as early as 1990 higher education was construed less as necessary public or social good and more as an individual or private good (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Couturier (2006) points to the public's view stating that as colleges and universities began pursuing more revenue opportunities and engaging in competitive behaviors, the public's investment in education also began to shift. The findings of this study do not support these notions among the university's faculty. Instead, the university's faculty seemed to be in touch with and uphold the values of being a public, research, land-grant university. Through their discussions about the purpose of higher education and even their expectations for students, their belief in the public good was apparent. Shapiro (2005) claimed research institutions played a significant role in moving society forward which comes with responsibilities to the world of scholarship and to the cultural and social aspirations for future generations. The findings from this study further suggest that faculty support this statement and fundamentally believe that education serves a public-good purpose in society. The faculty also had hoped that students would understand the larger purpose of pursuing higher education, gaining the skills to be productive citizens of society, and thus demonstrating a true desire to learn.

Faculty from across disciplines indicated their belief in the public good mission and a preference to work with students who approached their learning in this spirit.

Students demonstrated this desire to learn through their passion and motivation, but also through dedication of time and hard work. Some faculty were more specific such as Omar Pacana who described how students needed to want to develop critical thinking skills, claiming that this was necessary to facilitate social mobility. Others thought the higher education led to the development of certain skills, such as independent thinking and analysis that allowed students to be active citizens in a democracy. Both of these ideas are aligned with the public good mission. Social scientists talked most passionately about the impact of education on societal problems and the effects of education on future generations, additional principles of the public good mission. Couturier (2006) refers to America's commitment to provide education to populations who could otherwise not afford it as the "secret weapon" in the struggle to improve the well-being of American society (p. X). This notion was supported by faculty who upheld the American system of education as being one of the best in the world, especially like Bob Samuels and Cody Morgan who had studied outside the United States.

However, faculty in this study also cited instances where the public good mission was being challenged and expressed their frustration with these situations. For example, faculty identified the shift to a credential environment and the negative effect it was having on students' interest in learning and motivation to learn. This movement may represent an unintended consequence of a national focus on degree attainment. For example, the President has continued to focus national attention on the need to

increase higher education attainment, calling it “an economic imperative” in his most recent State of the Union address and a growing number of states have adopted formal goals for college attainment (Lumina Foundation, 2012). Callahan and Finney specified changes in the American middle-class standard living which now requires some level of education and training beyond high school (Callahan & Finney, 2002). They claimed that a credential was critical to achieving a middle-class income and argued for expanding the population who hold certain credentials. Some faculty members like Omar Pacana agreed with this position and recognized the practicality of needing a degree for students from lower income backgrounds, but like his peers continued to be uncomfortable with the shift in focus to securing a degree versus learning.

Midwestern University and its Board of Regents have both created benchmarks and declared goals related to graduation rates. According to the Lumina Foundation (2012), a focus on degree attainment will bolster the economy, strengthen democracy, and produce leaders to lead communities, align K-12 education with expectations for college readiness, and help develop innovative programs to meet emerging occupational needs. These rationales reflect both private and public good ideals, but the movement to a focus on degree attainment has challenged faculty perceptions of the public good mission. Perhaps, the Lumina Foundation’s position supports not only degree attainment but also assumes expansion of access which could lead to different outcomes on college campuses. Regardless of the rationale, faculty viewed the

movement to a credential environment as having a significantly negative and lasting impact mostly because of the changes in student behavior. For example, Jamie Newman and Saul Peterman both alluded to the business-like environment and cited the associated expectations of parents and students to “get what they paid for” regardless of the quality of the work the students produced. The experience of Drs. Newman and Peterman is supported in the literature, but is perhaps also a reflection of the increased costs in combination with the focus on degree attainment. Couturier (2006) claims students and parents are paying more out-of-pocket costs to universities in tuition and fees and as a result are demanding more in return for their investment. The combination of business-like expectations and a national focus on a credential challenges the public good mission that faculty members desire to uphold and instill in their students. The full effect or outcomes of this change in the educational landscape is yet to be fully seen.

Faculty in this study felt the pressure and described the tension of being asked to function in a business-like environment while pursuing the public good aspects of their positions. Faculty referenced how they were being asked to do more with less and that their research was changing to be directed and dictated by external funding opportunities versus those that mattered to the state and for the public benefit. This tension was foreshadowed in the theories of academic capitalism and the two-good framework. Several also mentioned the tension between teaching and research and the



reward disparity, even during tenure review. Niles Boyd specifically identified issues of rewarding faculty with more research time and penalizing those less successful in research with more teaching duties. This situation is likely an outcome of the administrative pressure to increase rankings and compete at a higher level. According to Weisbrod et al. (2008) and Slaughter and Rhoades (2004), the revenue is the root of this goal. While the faculty may not have understood all of the issues surrounding the institution's pressure to generate revenue, they experienced the outcomes and felt the effects in their day-to-day lives. This finding suggested that while faculty may believe in the public good, external pressures detract from being able to fulfill a public good mission. This finding further illustrates the complexity of the landscape in which this case was explored.

Finally, issues related to public policy, especially those in relation to the Dream Act were specifically cited by faculty as problematic to fulfilling a public good mission. Tim Yount, Penny Shanks, and Gary Jobes expressed frustration that a group of students has been denied access to postsecondary education because of citizenship. Each faculty member cited public good rationales as to why providing access to immigrants was beneficial to society and the right thing to do. For example, Gary Jobes discussed the generational effects of providing access to immigrants; Tim Yount cited the national goal of establishing a well-educated workforce; and Penny Shanks referenced the ethical responsibility of providing access to a large number of students within the state's

borders. The faculty referenced the political issues and discontent of the public as challenges to finding a solution to the issue of citizenship. This situation indicated that while faculty may uphold a public good ideal, such as providing access to a wide range of students, they are unable to control all outcomes and their work is affected by public policy. In other words, the faculty does not conduct their work in an environment free of political interference. Understanding the landscape is important in making judgments about an institution's ability to fulfill mission goals.

The findings related to faculty's belief and desire to uphold a public good mission are also significant because they illustrate the faculty's larger sense of purpose that Shapiro references as key to the future of a university. Shapiro (2005) states:

The future of the research university is dependent on the nature of the values and objectives informing the university's leadership at all levels. Most of all it depends on a vision of who we are and what we would like to become. It depends on understanding, for example, what we as a university would not allow ourselves to do even if offered additional resources and what we would do only if additional resources are made available. It depends on having a well-understood and socially compelling sense of purpose (p. xvi).

Although this study did not consider the views of traditional leaders such as the president, provost or chairs, this study argues that the faculty provides the leadership on many of the initiatives and carries out the day-to-day responsibilities in order to fulfill

the missions of the institution. The faculty's fundamental belief in the public good and desire to fulfill the institutional and public good mission is challenging. It is also positioned within other complicating factors, such as institutional goals, the need for revenue, national movements, politics and state and federal policies. The findings support Shapiro's notion that well-understood and socially compelling goals and purpose underlie faculty members' beliefs and are important to how they approach their work. Yet, contingent questions remain such as how to fund postsecondary education. These questions are similar to other social services in society. "The social goal of higher education for all is remarkably similar to that of health care insurance for all: very appealing, not clearly defined as to the quality of service, and controversial as to who should pay for it" (Weisbrod et al., 2008, pp. 286-287). The findings of this study support and further evolve this notion by contributing the faculty perspective. The faculty view of the dilemma includes an interest and fundamental belief in the access and public good mission, but questions and a lack of specificity about prioritizing and funding mission related activities. The next section further adds to the complexity by examining the faculty view of their role in student access and success.

### **Faculty Culture and Role**

In this section I focus on the major finding that members of the faculty do not view themselves as actors in contributing to student access. I also explore related findings including:

1. Faculty member's beliefs were often rooted in personal experiences or anecdotes that led to being out of touch with the realities facing today's college students.
2. Faculty members did not realize the opportunities that they controlled that foster student success or consider that their involvement in outreach activities could help students meet their expectations and contribute to improving access.
3. Faculty members held many expectations for students which were never explicitly made known to students, such as expecting students to initiate communication with the faculty. Faculty members did not consider reaching out to students as an option in their role.

Weisbrod and associates (2008) argue that by observing the educational and scholarly commitments of institutions and their faculties, important aspects of society are uncovered such as the importance of innovation and discovery, the significance of certain cognitive abilities and highly prized virtues, and the nature of values, broad hopes and aspirations of society itself. Faculty members determine what skills, knowledge, and experiences are valued in academia (Weidman, 1989). The findings of this study extend these notions in that as a result of the faculty's expectation and perspective about knowledge, skills and experiences, the faculty determines how a public good mission is enacted and access is carried out in an institution. However,

another significant finding of this study suggests that the faculty does not view itself as an actor in access and may be out of touch with many of the issues related to access. This finding reflects an earlier sentiment regarding the importance of the faculty and their day-to-day responsibilities in carrying out the institutional and public good missions.

In this study, there were two groups of faculty, one that generally believed in a public good and institutional mission that supported access, and another that believed in a public good and institutional mission but who did not connect these missions to issues of access. However, faculty members in both groups struggled to view themselves as active players or contributors to an access mission. This was true even for those faculty members who self-identified as first-generation college graduates. Faculty members could also not see themselves as adversaries or barriers to access, even to those opportunities that they controlled (e.g. research lab positions). The inability for faculty to see a role in the access mission could be because access is a very complex issue with widely-held notions based on personal experience or that of close friends and family members. Additionally, access is not widely discussed. The findings from this study identified several assumptions and views on the part of faculty members that would be difficult to challenge and convince them otherwise, such as Dr. Alton Sanders' view that loans were easy for students to secure. Additionally, members of the faculty are facing significant challenges in terms of their evolving roles and competing demands

on their time which could contribute to a limited understanding of access as Dr. Niles Boyd referenced when he mentioned that he did not want to verify a student's "extenuating circumstances" or reason why the student requested more time on an assignment. Still another explanation is that faculty simply did not connect certain activities to access. This situation was reflected in Dr. Ingrid Velez's perspective when she stated that "just because access is hard does not mean we shouldn't do it," but was vague about the role of faculty and activities that faculty could partake in to contribute to access.

Based on others' descriptions of activities, members of the faculty identified ways in which they could contribute to the access mission even if they did not make the direct connection between the activity and access. For instance, faculty play an important role in outreach activities, such as camps or experiences for young students, continued education for K-12 teachers, and campus visits for prospective students and their families. Many of the outreach activities are faculty driven or highly dependent upon faculty participation for success. Each of these contributes to an access mission or public good mission. Furthermore, those focused on young students provide early exposure to college campuses and begin to provide a means for understanding the expectations of faculty. Many faculty members cited the significance of early outreach and exposure to college expectations as a factor in access and success. The outcomes of these experiences, such as confidence and ability to navigate the college campus, were

also highly valued by faculty. The findings of this study suggest that it is important for faculty to understand the role that they can play in access and connect the activities they are already involved in back to access. For instance Dr. Susana Milovich described a camp where she began to notice that students left more empowered and confident about their own education. Dr. Marty Gore also talked about experiences that excited students and helped them to stay motivated to take college preparatory courses in the sciences. These outcomes are significant and critical for students. Yet, many faculty members were still unable to see their role in access. The findings from this study suggest that those opportunities that provide insight into academia are often controlled by faculty; thus, it is important for faculty to also understand the role that the activities could have in contributing to a student's self-confidence, a value they hold in high esteem.

Faculty represent the heart of the institution, in particular the tenured and tenure-track faculty, but shifts in faculty roles also have impacted their duties, responsibilities and the expectations that universities can hold them to. Gumpert and Zemsky (2003) argued that the most commonly overlooked and most significant change in higher education has been the shift in faculty roles and the very definition of "faculty" itself. For instance, the development of the full-time nontenure-track faculty was an institutional solution for cost savings and flexibility that facilitated institutional needs and freed up resources (Shaker, 2008). The increased reliance of professors of practice

to carry the heaviest teaching loads and staff persons to serve as advisors for students served other institutional objectives, such as allowing the tenured and tenure-track faculty to prioritize research and expenditure goals (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Yet these changes in faculty roles and duties also could leave these faculty members out of touch with students and the realities that they are facing. This notion is supported by the findings of this study which indicate that some faculty members are unfamiliar and removed from the issues facing today's students.

For example, several faculty members indicated a frustration and lack of tolerance for students who needed to work. They expected students to treat their education like a job and to find alternative ways for paying their educational costs. This view assumed that students had the ability to secure funding, and ignored the individual's situation and the complexity of financial aid. At Midwestern University, the financial aid office is unable to meet students' full need, even for the neediest students. The gap in funding requires students to work, beyond work-study assistance. Faculty participants also described their expectation that students arrive on campus ready to learn and equipped with the necessary skills to perform at a certain level. This view indicated a poor understanding of the disparity in student preparation, variety of student backgrounds, and appreciation for a wide-range of students at the university. However, in some instances faculty expressed that time was the reason why they were less enthusiastic in handling underprepared students or verifying the circumstances of



students who requested additional time on assignments. This view was limited to several pre-tenured faculty members suggesting that perhaps they struggle to prioritize their various responsibilities as they manage the significant pressure of making progress towards tenure.

Given that many of the tenured and tenure-track faculty control the opportunities that lead to student success, like access to research experiences, this shift in faculty roles could be complicating the access problem. All faculty participants in this study had to have taught undergraduates within the last two years, but there were distinctive opinions about who should be working with which students. For instance, Quincy Anderson in agricultural life sciences called working with underclassman a “horror story” that he was grateful to not have to experience, but Sue Jones in arts and humanities said it was important and a core value of hers and her department for all students to work with the tenured faculty. At the same time, Sue Jones indicated that she struggled to manage all of her roles of teaching, advising, research and service. Dr. Jones is an associate professor. Clark (2004) suggested that young faculty loyalty is more likely to be towards a project or their field versus the institution or department. The findings from this study indicate some agreement with this position, especially for faculty in a department in which a culture and collective work has not been guided or established. Drs. Kami Kelly and Jack Tucker also in arts and humanities discussed how their department emphasized their mission and gathered faculty buy-in on their

collective values and goals. Given the department norms and culture and prioritization of tenure track and tenured faculty interacting with all students, the faculty in this area understood student issues much differently than those in other discipline areas. This finding indicates that culture and faculty roles matter in the faculty role in supporting an access mission and facilitating student success.

Finally, faculty participants also described preconceived notions about their roles that influenced the ways in which they framed issues of access or interacted with students. For instance, faculty expected students to approach them with questions and to seek out opportunities, like access to a research experience. Kami Kelly in arts and humanities acknowledged that this “ivory tower” way of thinking was outdated and predicted that this view would change with the institutional pressure to recruit and retain more students. However, most faculty participants were unable to view themselves as being proactive in student access or success and instead relied on students to seek out them and the opportunities in which they held power over. When faculty recalled their most rewarding student interactions, the examples always began with a student who came to the faculty member. Yet, for those faculty members who shared their personal educational path, often they cited the impact of their mentors and of someone reaching out and encouraging them. Furthermore, faculty members also expressed an expectation for students to attend office hours, ask questions during class or to talk with them after class for assistance. Face-to-face communication is only one

way that students might initiate interactions with faculty. Faculty members that expect this type of interaction may be out of touch with today's college students who expect open communication through a variety of technologies and venues. The findings from this study are unable to compare tenured and tenure-track faculty expectations and roles to nontenure-track faculty, but this is an area of further research.

### **Access and Success: Cultural Capital, Financial, and Academic Considerations**

In this section, I examine the following findings:

1. The faculty expects students to demonstrate a certain cultural capital and rewards students who demonstrate these skills, behaviors and knowledge.
2. The cultural capital valued by faculty is implied and not explicitly available for students; furthermore, the faculty expects students to demonstrate associated behaviors that are specific to one's cultural capital.
3. The faculty prefers to work with students who exhibit a certain cultural capital over those who exhibit other forms of cultural capital.
4. The faculty believed that cultural capital was gained through one's family unit.
5. Faculty members expected students from first-generation or low-income backgrounds to be exceptional in order to complete with their peers; furthermore, faculty from similar backgrounds expected these students to overcome the odds much like they did twenty to thirty years earlier.

6. There was little consensus among faculty regarding merit- versus need-based aid and several misunderstandings about the current landscape of financial aid.
7. The faculty disagreed about the merits of academic markers in determining students' academic preparation, yet still relied on this criterion.
8. The faculty believed that demonstrating a desire to learn and the associated skills and attitudes embodied in this attitude were as important to student success as was academic preparation, yet the faculty did not view itself as playing a role in fostering these behaviors and attitude.
9. Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "field" is critically important to fully understanding the nuances in the access puzzle and the significance of cultural capital in student access and success.

The opportunity gap continues to be the subject of studies (Heller, 2004; St. John et al., 2011; Perna, 2006) and in part motivated the current study at hand. St. John (2012) argues that the four-year institutions, especially research institutions have become a privileged environment relegating low-income, first-generation and minority student participation in postsecondary education to two-year institutions. While this statement does not accurately reflect the views of the faculty in this study, it is possible to imagine the reality of this outcome if an access mission is not prioritized or if the faculty chooses to not participate in an access mission.

Although not an explicit question of the study, faculty participants extended their responses beyond access to student success. Faculty in this study rarely discussed access without also including issues related to student success and degree attainment. Considering the full picture of both access and success in part reflects the emerging way in which access is being studied, such as through academic capital formation. Student success in many ways is related to access issues, especially considering that admissions criteria was established to increase the probability of success of students at a given institution (Etzioni, 1971). Furthermore, the faculty makes determinations about and assigns value to the student attributes esteemed in the field of higher education and exerts control over the experiences that led to success at the university and in their disciplines. They also influence admissions standards and as one faculty member cited, can opt to refuse to implement policy decisions.

Faculty in this study also identified the traditional factors of access such as academic preparation and financial concerns, but they described these from a unique perspective not currently reflected in the literature on access. They also emphasized the important role of cultural capital which also has begun to emerge as a more prevalent consideration in access and success. Finally, faculty participants were silent on the issue of college choice, one of the traditional ways in which college access has been studied. Furthermore, there was limited discussion about the different types of postsecondary institutions and their roles in college access. The faculty perspectives and findings in this

study are strongly grounded and reflective in the context of Midwestern University, as described above.

### **Cultural capital.**

Although faculty participants did not identify the skills and attitudes they valued, such as access to knowledge as cultural capital, the issues they referenced are defined by Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and reflected in the framework of academic capital formation. Cultural capital refers to the culturally relevant skills, knowledge, competencies or abilities that one is able to acquire through education and/or from one's family or social origin (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). St. John et al.'s (2011) emerging theory of academic capital formation considers the role of cultural capital in student access and degree attainment and ultimately links it Bourdieu's notion that certain forms of cultural capital lead to social transformation (or reproduction). Within Bourdieu's grand theory of social reproduction, the construct of "field" is a key concept where cultural capital, habitus, and taste are framed within the social realm (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). As Winkle-Wagner (2010) noted, "it is only within a particular field that cultural capital holds value, produces an effect or even exists...like a game each field has its own rules or system of valuation that determine the conditions of entry or inclusion" (pp. 7-8). The findings of this study provide overwhelming support regarding the importance of field in determining the value of students' cultural capital. Faculty members discussed their expectations for students and indicated certain rewards based

upon students' attitudes and behaviors. Many of these expectations are not explicitly made apparent to students through the traditional college readiness and preparatory strategies, such as college fairs and information sessions, campus visits and others. Furthermore, many faculty indicated that these traits were likely not available in the educational system, but instead were reliant on family values and background. The findings of this study suggest that faculty members reward particular aspects of cultural capital, unknowingly and unintentionally, thus influencing student learning and access to learning opportunities. This notion is supported in the literature where Winkle-Wagner (2010) claimed that stakeholders in education, faculty, administrators and staff may unconsciously reward acquired cultural capital from his or her family over a student who has not.

Faculty members in this study indicated that they placed value on the cultural capital skills and qualities that reflected their expectations. This included family values and expectations that taught students' knowledge about navigating the college campus, modeled confidence and self-advocacy, and instilled strong work-ethic, curiosity, and a desire to learn. These expectations are often hidden from students, yet rewarded by faculty members through access to opportunities (e.g. research labs, teaching assistants, etc.). Furthermore, faculty indicated a preference for working with students that were able to demonstrate these values and forms of cultural capital. For example, Sara Alto who allowed a freshmen researcher into her lab only did so because of the attitudes she

demonstrated. This out of the ordinary opportunity underscored the importance of cultural capital and reflected Dr. Alto's endorsement of certain aspects of cultural capital. Members of the faculty make decisions like this one every day about who gains access to an opportunity, but they were unable to connect the decision back to playing an active role in contributing to issues of access or improving access.

The findings from this study also further suggest a level of specificity for one's cultural capital as demonstrated through certain key behaviors. Beyond asking questions, attending office hours, and taking charge of one's education, there were also many caveats to the way in which faculty expected students to demonstrate their cultural capital. Faculty referenced the need for students to ask the *right* questions at the *right* time and in ways that were appropriate for the given situation. They expected students to be independent thinkers and to problem-solve on their own, but only to the point that they were not in a dead-end situation for a certain amount of time, as Dag Aguilar explained. This finding suggests that not only are students expected to understand faculty expectations, they also needed to be in touch with granular preferences. Students were expected to know and perform with limited to no guidance from faculty, suggesting that there is a disconnect between the skills that faculty members think are necessary for them to want to work with students and students' knowledge of those skills. Students are not explicitly being taught these things. The expectations related to cultural capital combined with a reactive approach on the part



of the faculty may disadvantage certain student groups, especially those from families where these values and skills were not gained.

Faculty expected students to enter the university with this knowledge and understanding and anticipated that students gained these cultural capital skills within the family unit. Faculty had little faith that students would learn and gain the cultural capital skills necessary for success outside the family unit, but did consider that early intervention and role models could make an impact on certain students. This finding does not value the various backgrounds of students or their associated cultural capital and suggests that the other forms of cultural capital that students bring with them to college may not be valued. This finding also points to the fact that value faculty place on cultural capital reflects preconceived notions and possibly biases. The field in which faculty understand and relate issues of access is significantly important to understanding the values they place on cultural capital and in unearthing the preconceived notions and biases that may be affecting access.

Overall the findings related to cultural capital presents a challenge for access in how students learn the implicit values, expectations and preferences of faculty. However, it also further suggests that the recent ways in which access is being studied with consideration of cultural capital is more likely to reflect the views of faculty, a key stakeholder group. The faculty perspective confirms the importance of cultural capital and represents a significant finding. Although the faculty members in this study had not

viewed themselves as actors in access, this study's findings suggest that their role is important and should be considered.

### **Financial.**

In addition, findings from this study suggest that as Winkle-Wagner (2010) noted, a field is also often class-based and reinforces cultural capital of family origin. Faculty participants expected first-generation and low-income students to be exceptional in order to compete among their peers who possessed more cultural capital and had access to more resources. This was demonstrated by their perceptions regarding student finances. Some faculty like Jamie Newman, Quincy Anderson and Shawna Alkhatib believed that plenty of funding existed for underprivileged students as long as they were "extremely bright", "very good" or had the cultural capital and knowledge needed to access the readily available aid. This view was clustered among the science and business faculty and less apparent in the social sciences or arts and humanities.

Other faculty members who discussed their high expectations for first-generation and/or low-income students were those from similar types of backgrounds. Faculty members from this group expected students to overcome any barrier they faced much like themselves. Mae Lockett described her fight to be granted an exception to campus policies to take multiple math courses during a semester to compensate for a poor K-12 preparation. She expected students to demonstrate this same self-advocacy,

cultural capital (knowledge of navigating college policies), stubbornness, and fervor.

Other first-generation faculty members like Dag Aguilar, Alton Sanders, and Hank Jensen shared experiences in the same spirit which were reflected then in their expectations for students. The highest expectations for first-generation and low-income students were found among the first-generation faculty in the physical sciences. Yet, all first-generation faculty members seemed to hold students from these groups to higher expectations than their non-first-generation faculty colleagues. This finding suggests that while first-generation faculty members may be advocates for students from these backgrounds, they also approach this in an unanticipated fashion. Understanding the barriers and challenges that students from these groups faced is only one part of advocacy, the other aspect is embedded within the faculty's expectations.

The other finding related to faculty expectations of first-generation and low-income students is that faculty assumed that they would enter the academy less-prepared. This assumption was an underlying notion among most of the faculty, across all disciplines and among both first-generation and non-first-generation faculty. This expectation could contribute to the stereotype effect, or reinforce the negative outcome anticipated due to one's family origin without the faculty realizing it ([reducingstereotypeeffect.org](http://reducingstereotypeeffect.org)). For example the literature on labeling "at-risk" students cautions against grouping students into categories based on certain demographics out of concern of a self-fulfilling prophecy ([reducingstereotypeeffect.org](http://reducingstereotypeeffect.org)). Still socioeconomic

status is highly related to academic preparation and students experience the outcome of these factors in the financial aid arena.

The policies associated with financial aid are critical examples that reflect the ideology, assumptions and values related to the public versus private good mission (Perna, 2008; Weisbrod et al., 2008). Academically-based aid disproportionately flows to White and more affluent students, which represents a financial aid system that does not support students and families with the most financial need (Couturier, 2006). Doyle, Delaney and Naughton (2009) emphasized the need for a balanced approach between the two competing goals of meeting unmet student need and fostering institutional excellence through merit-based aid programs. From this study's findings, while faculty often referenced financial concerns and funding as a barrier to access, most were unfamiliar with the availability and nature of financial awards. This suggests that faculty may have long-standing assumptions about accessibility to aid that may be misguided. It also suggests that while they understand the tensions in their daily lives as a result of the current landscape of higher education, they may be less likely to conceptualize how the landscape affects students.

There was little consensus among faculty participants regarding merit- and need-based aid. Many who were first-generation or from lower income backgrounds acknowledged the important role of need-based aid. For instance, Hank Jensen specifically called out issues with aid going to students based on demographics and

believed that it was unfair and unjust for aid to be distributed based upon any criterion other than income. Still other faculty members who had stated previously that they anticipated students from lower income backgrounds to be underprepared academically argued for aid to be distributed on merit criteria only. Essentially they dismissed the notion that academic preparation varied among student groups as a result of socioeconomic status in discussions related to financial aid. In other words, while faculty assumed that students from lower income backgrounds were likely to be less prepared than their peers, they still expected low-income students to compete at the same level as their peers from higher income backgrounds for merit-based aid. A disconnect exists between faculty assumptions and expectations related to academic preparation and financial aid. This finding represents an interesting nuance of the access issue and suggests that faculty may not fully understand the relationship between academic preparation and financial aid. St. John (2003) responded to a similar disconnect when creating the balanced access model, a precursor to academic capital formation. The balanced access model demonstrated that financial concerns and barriers explained the largest difference in proportion between low-income and high-income students that did not enroll, after controlling for academic preparation (St. John, 2003).

### **Academic.**

Academic ability and preparation represent significant components of the access puzzle and solution. Faculty participants discussed academic preparation and

background required for success and access to their majors and indicated an interest in working with certain groups of students based on academic ability. For example, Shawna Alkhatib's perspective that students are "either born with it or not" in reference to ability to perform academically demonstrates how preconceived notions are reflected in the opportunities that faculty believe students are worthy of, including access to postsecondary education and her discipline. Her beliefs were also reflected in her preferences of which students she wants to work with. Several of the faculty participants, like Shawna Alkhatib, discussed prestige and an interest in improving the reputation of the university. However, many of these same faculty members also believed in the institutional and public good mission of the land-grant institution. Like the two-good framework emphasized, the findings from this study support that both mission-good and revenue-good priorities are important to the faculty at MU, but implications are difficult to fully realize.

In 2006, Couturier foreshadowed the convergence of trends citing competition for students, faculty, revenue, and prestige, and questioned the impact on issues of access, such as making progress on eliminating the opportunity gap among certain groups of students. Today, this convergence seems to be the reality with little indication that the environment will change, resources will become more available, or that decisions regarding priorities will become easier. While faculty participants made blanket statements about institutional priorities, such as improving academic

reputation, they were less specific about the effects of priorities on certain students. At the same time faculty who discussed expanding access talked easily about embracing an open access mission, until they believed that the outcomes would directly impact them. There was a general notion that students should arrive at the university fully prepared for college-level work. Furthermore, if others were admitted, it was perceived as a “disservice” to the student and university. Only a handful of faculty suggested that the University had a role in remediation or other assistance for academically underprepared students. These faculty perceptions tended to be from the first-generation faculty.

Weisbrod et al. (2008) posit that by observing admissions and enrollment decisions of colleges and universities, society reveals who it believes should have access to education and who should receive access to what types of education. Faculty often referenced academic standards as important, but they also indicated that the traditional academic markers were not always reliable in determining which students would be successful in their classrooms. For instance, faculty members expressed frustration that students “looked good on paper” and then did poorly once at the university. Some faculty blamed the K-12 school system for poor preparation, especially with regard to science and math preparation. Others assigned responsibility to the students for not retaining knowledge over the course of their preparation, or indicated some combination of both teacher and student. One faculty member, Sara Alto specifically cited a lack of standardization among K-12 schools as a problem and had little faith in

the traditional academic markers for predicting success, especially grade point average. However, Dr. Alto expressed significant concern regarding the university's expansion goals and questioned if students with lower ACT scores would be admitted in order to meet the enrollment goal. This contradiction suggests that while faculty members rely on admissions standards, they may be doing because it has been a long-standing practice that is now deeply rooted in higher education culture.

Predictive models of success are built upon assumptions related to standardized test scores, grade point average, and college preparatory curriculum. There was little consensus among the faculty on the merits of admissions standards. Yet, many faculty members in the study assumed that the admissions standards represented the mission and institutional goals. Only one faculty member cited an instance of where she felt empowered to challenge administrative decisions related to admissions criterion. This finding suggests that while admissions and enrollment decisions of colleges may reflect who society believes should have access, it may not be who the faculty thinks deserve access, at least at a large, public research university where faculty are further removed from administrative decisions such as this.

***Other skills and attitudes needed for success.***

The contradiction of using academic markers for admissions and the faculty acknowledging the inaccuracy of these markers presents a significant challenge in addressing academic issues related to student access. Furthermore, faculty members



also expressed frustration with the admissions criterion because most believed that other skills and attitudes, such as motivation and work ethic were as important to student success as was academic preparation. Faculty members passionately described the importance for students to want to learn and many indicated that they preferred to work with students who demonstrated behaviors that embodied this attitude. Some faculty viewed a desire to learn and the behaviors and skills they associated with this frame of mind as possible mitigations for poor academic preparation. In other words, the faculty believed that a desire to learn was paramount and was as critical to one's success as his or her academic ability and preparation. Faculty participants placed enormous value on the attitudes and behaviors that demonstrated a student's desire to learn, such as asking questions and being proactive. This view was held among faculty participants across all disciplines, ranks, and backgrounds.

The faculty views of student attitudes and behaviors indicate that a simple desire to learn is highly valued in educational settings and is the most acceptable goal of attending college. A student's desire to learn and consequently their confidence, passion, motivation, commitment, curiosity, independence and ability to take control of their education affects access and success, such as through their ability to gain access to certain opportunities once on campus. For students who are less familiar with "what the university is," they may not understand or realize how their behaviors are being interpreted and how that could affect their access to certain opportunities. Faculty

participants in this study did not consider the possibility that students may not grasp the importance of demonstrating these characteristics, thus some students could face certain disadvantages. Faculty also did not view themselves as playing a role in the development of these skills. Members of the faculty may not have understood the importance of clearly articulating expectations and the impact that their expectations have on student access and success. These findings further evolve Bourdieu's concepts of field and cultural capital in that a students' cultural capital is highly valued in the academy and faculty members assume that students should arrive on college campuses ready to display particular skills, qualities, and knowledge.

Demonstrating a desire to learn, as well as the associated behaviors that signal to faculty that students are committed to learning, is absent from the college access literature. Faculty were mostly interested in students demonstrating a desire to learn because they thought these students were more likely to develop independent and critical thinking skills that were necessary for success upon graduation. Faculty connected the learning outcomes to public good ideals, such as community leadership and active citizenship in the democracy. This notion is also related to the foundational mission of institutions to educate and the role faculty play in creating and sharing knowledge. Many of these concepts are out of context for undergraduate students. Without more explicit information available to students about faculty expectations and the attributes that faculty value, deserving students may be left out of higher education

or they may unintentionally remove themselves from certain opportunities. The desire to learn ultimately leads to success after graduation, but is also critical to access to the university and to securing opportunities on campus. Consideration should be given for how to be more direct and intentional about educating students on the attitudes and behaviors faculty value in higher education. At the same time, there is a need to help faculty understand how their biases impact their perceptions and interactions with students, ultimately affecting student access to opportunity.

The nuances of the academy and preferences of faculty are not represented in access models and rarely communicated to students, yet are important to accessing opportunity. At Midwestern University, admissions standards are narrowly focused on academic ability measures and do not consider “soft skills.” Yet, students rely on admissions standards as indicators of faculty expectations and the necessary skills they need to master prior to enrollment. They also provide signals to students about whom they can expect to interact with during their educational career and who they may compete with for opportunities once on campus. Given the vast differences in faculty expectations and misalignment with the admissions standards, students need to be given alternative ways for learning about faculty expectations and be educated about what admissions standards truly represent. Improving access will require creative solutions in deciphering the academic abilities and skills that predict success, and incredible effort to educate and gain faculty buy-in to overcome long-standing

assumptions. Finally, the extent to which faculty participants focused on science and math preparation indicates a need for further study and analysis, including specificity of these skills in access models.

### **Academic Capital Formation**

The finding explored in this section relates to the emerging theory of academic capital formation and suggests that St. John's (2012) reconceptualization of academic capital formation where he expands upon the role of "field" is prudent and worthy of further expansion.

Academic capital formation was connected to the other two theoretical frameworks of academic capitalism and the two-good framework through the fundamental ideology of the public good. However, academic capital formation examined the heart of the public good notion – access, from a student and programmatic perspective. Simply stated, academic capital formation represents the process and outcomes of educational attainment (St. John et al., 2011). Academic capital formation refers to the process that occurs when students make educational transitions including the processes of college readiness and preparation, college choice and enrollment, student success and retention, graduation and career choice, and giving back to communities or families/family uplift (St. John, 2012). Findings from this study suggest that faculty have perspectives and hold beliefs about each of these transitions. At times these beliefs can create a bias or preconceived notion about certain students'

ability to access and succeed in education. Additionally, the findings indicate that in many instances faculty influence and control access to the activities that support the successful transitions that academic capital formation theorizes about.

Academic and financial access played major roles in academic capital formation but the concepts were positioned differently from traditional models of access due to St. John et al.'s focus on a broader set of social processes. The findings from this study agree with the ACF model in that the findings support that cultural capital is related to aspects of both academic and financial access. Instead of considering academic and financial issues like the balanced access model, ACF embedded these issues in the more appropriate components of cultural, human and social capital theories. As a result, academic capital formation presented a messier reality, demonstrating the complexity of social processes and the multifaceted nature of the access phenomena. This study evolves this position by adding in the faculty perspective which is equally as messy and at times contradictory. For instance, the faculty expects students to meet admissions criteria that they find is unreliable and indicates support for an open access mission until academic reputation, remediation, or their classrooms may be impacted by admitting underprepared students.

In his 2012 work, St. John alluded to the importance of understanding the institutional environment in his restatement of the emerging theory of academic capital formation. This study advances his concept of "field" in the theory and confirms the

necessity of understanding context and the faculty perspective. Furthermore, this study identified several issues that were hidden in the academic capital formation model that deserve more explicit attention and study. Examples include faculty expectations regarding the specificity of cultural capital and the behaviors that are highly valued, beyond knowledge or ability to navigate the university.

Evidence of the underlying grand theory of social reproduction versus transformation in ACF also emerged in this study through faculty perspectives regarding the public good mission of education. Class reproduction and transformation are connected to the notion of the public good mission and often serves as the basis for expanding access to postsecondary education. While St. John et al. (2011) does not directly reference the notion of a public good mission in the model, generational uplift reflects public good ideals. Few faculty participants outside of the social scientists in this study were able to make the connection of access to class reproduction versus transformation, but many upheld public good beliefs. For the first-generation faculty members, they recognized the impact of education in their own lives and often referenced giving back to future generations, even if they held these students to the highest expectations. These perspectives support Bourdieu's grand theory and fundamental basis of academic capital formation.

However, more education is needed to help all faculty members understand the critical role they play in access and in transforming generations, provided this is a

mission that the university wants embodied by its faculty. This study also suggests that faculty need more tools and guidance to know how to facilitate access in order to be empowered to play an active role. Further consideration and expansion about the full impact that the public good mission (i.e. active citizenship, creation and dissemination of knowledge) could play in access solutions may provide additional insight and ideas for addressing this long-standing problem.

### **Conclusions**

The conclusions in this section visually illustrate the findings and textually summarize the essential factors of the faculty perspective of access. Typically studies about access focus on programs and students and rarely incorporate a faculty view. A myopic approach to assessing the environment of education without considering faculty perceptions overlooks the importance of foundational assumptions and principles of higher education in how faculty interact with students. This also misjudges the significant challenges facing access programs and initiatives and the critical role faculty play in facilitating access and success. Although I did not conduct a full analysis comparing and contrasting faculty from the various disciplines, ranks or backgrounds, initial findings suggest that these factors may be important in drilling-down into faculty perspectives regarding access and their environments. Differences among the faculty's perspective hinged on small subset of factors presented in Table 8.

<i>Table 8</i>
<b><i>Factors of Variability among Faculty Perceptions about Access</i></b>
Background (i.e. first-generation and low-income status)
Department culture
Discipline categorization/culture
Course assignment and/or primary interaction with undergraduates (i.e. upperclassman, underclassman or both)
Rank
Years of service

In addition, the lessons learned from this case study attempt to better explain the concept of “field” referenced in St. John et al.’s (2011) theory of academic capital formation, and to shed light on the connections between fields, such as the way that the “field” of the market and political environment influences the “field” of higher education. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the “field” of discipline also influences the “field” where faculty determine expectations and assign values to students’ cultural capital. Through this case study, it became evident that the faculty played a significant role in carrying out the mission and needed direction from the institution regarding how to interpret the priorities and to accomplish their work in the spirit of the missions. This study emphasizes the need for faculty buy-in and advocates for access to make progress on the opportunity gap. A summary table of the findings is presented in Table 9 which illustrates how the findings are directly impacted by faculty, institution or external factors.



**Table 9**

<b><i>Summary of Findings and Identified Key Influencers (in order of priority according to faculty)</i></b>	
A perceived responsibility to the state affects how an institutional mission is fulfilled	Institution Faculty External forces and stakeholders
A responsibility to provide an affordable and accessible university exists	Institution External forces and stakeholders Faculty
Admissions standards reflect institutional mission	Institution Faculty
Beliefs about the purpose of education reflect a desire to uphold a public good mission	Faculty
A movement to a credential environment challenges the public good mission	Institution External forces and stakeholders Faculty
Intellectual ability and academic preparation are the customary predictors of success	Institution Faculty
Raw talent versus learned skills: Students are born with skills and learn skills that lead to success	Faculty
We cannot fix everything at the university level: K-12 education	External forces and stakeholders Institution Faculty
A strong foundation is critical to student access and success	External forces and stakeholders
Universities must deal with the effects of poor K-12 preparation	Institution Faculty
Community college credit is not the answer	External forces and stakeholders
Family background becomes cultural capital issues that determine who gains access	External forces and stakeholders Faculty
Family values and expectations predetermine access	External forces and stakeholders
Deficits in family units can be rectified by role models and early intervention	External forces and stakeholders Institution Faculty
Diversity is valued, but racial and ethnic background can still negatively affect access	Faculty Institution External forces and stakeholders
Socioeconomic background affects access beyond a family's ability to pay	External forces and stakeholders

<b>Con't Table 9</b>	
<b>Summary of Findings and Identified Key Influencers (in order of priority according to faculty)</b>	
Faculty perceptions of student attitudes: Demonstrating a desire to learn is essential	Faculty

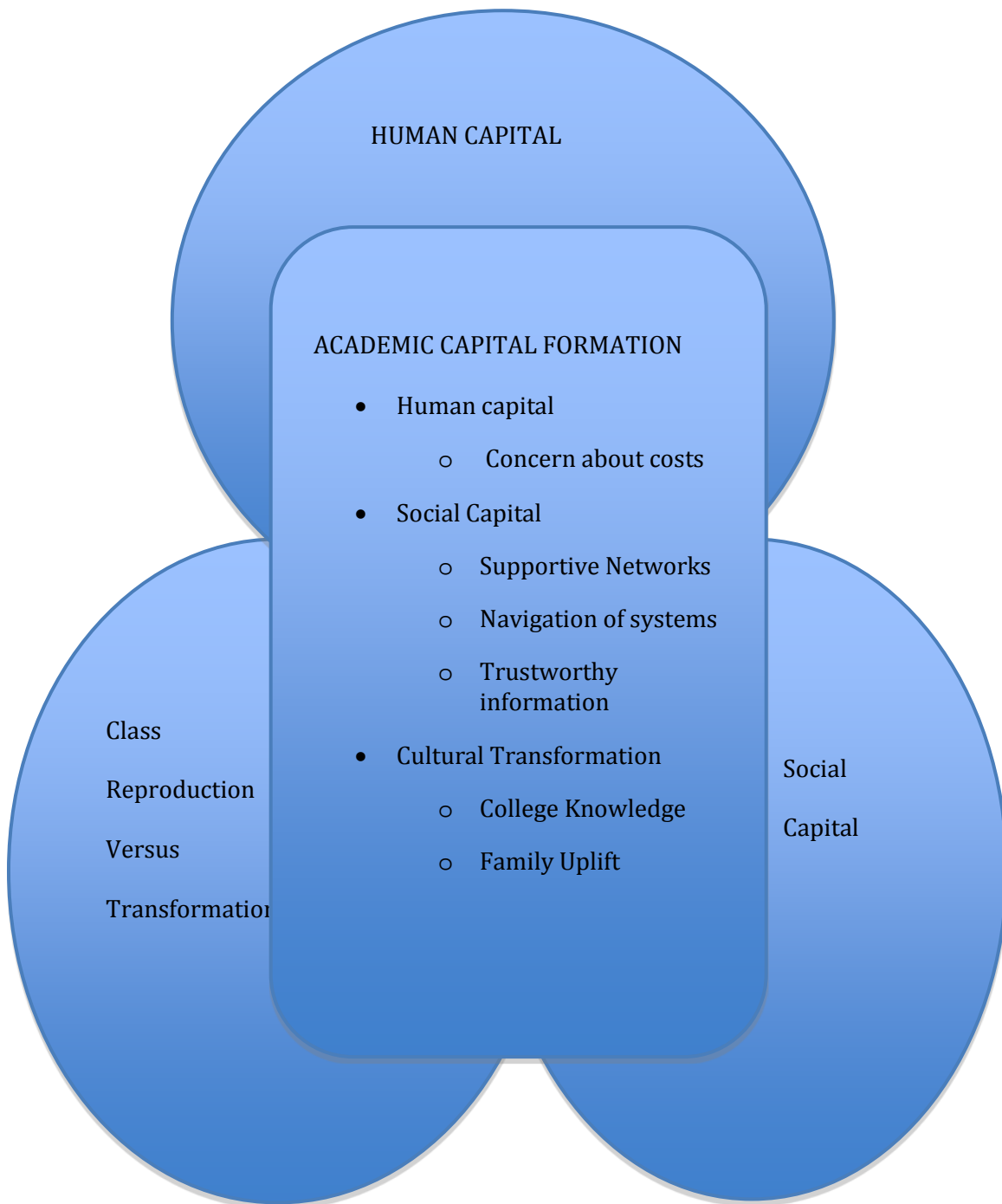
Finally, the theory of academic capital formation strives to frame the social processes of educational transitions as they relate to three theories of capital – social, human and cultural. As expected as more scholars use academic capital formation, the theory has evolved. Similarly, the findings from this study present a slightly modified conceptual map of academic capital formation. The two significant propositions include, 1) examples of the capital theories are more reflective of faculty expectations, and 2) the public good ideal of social reproduction versus transformation surrounds the model versus being located within the model. The two figures, Figures 4 and 5, present St. John's (2012) model of academic capital formation alongside the altered model based upon data from this study.

Like Clark (2004) noted, “complex universities operating in complex environments require complex differentiated solutions” (p. 177). The concept of “field” recognizes the significance of context. Unfortunately, the issues of access are much larger than one institution and the tension between missions present significant challenges for institutions. Furthermore, it is idealistic to believe that institutions would be able to determine a collective answer about who deserves access to the institution and to the public good. Competing priorities at the institution are reflected in faculty

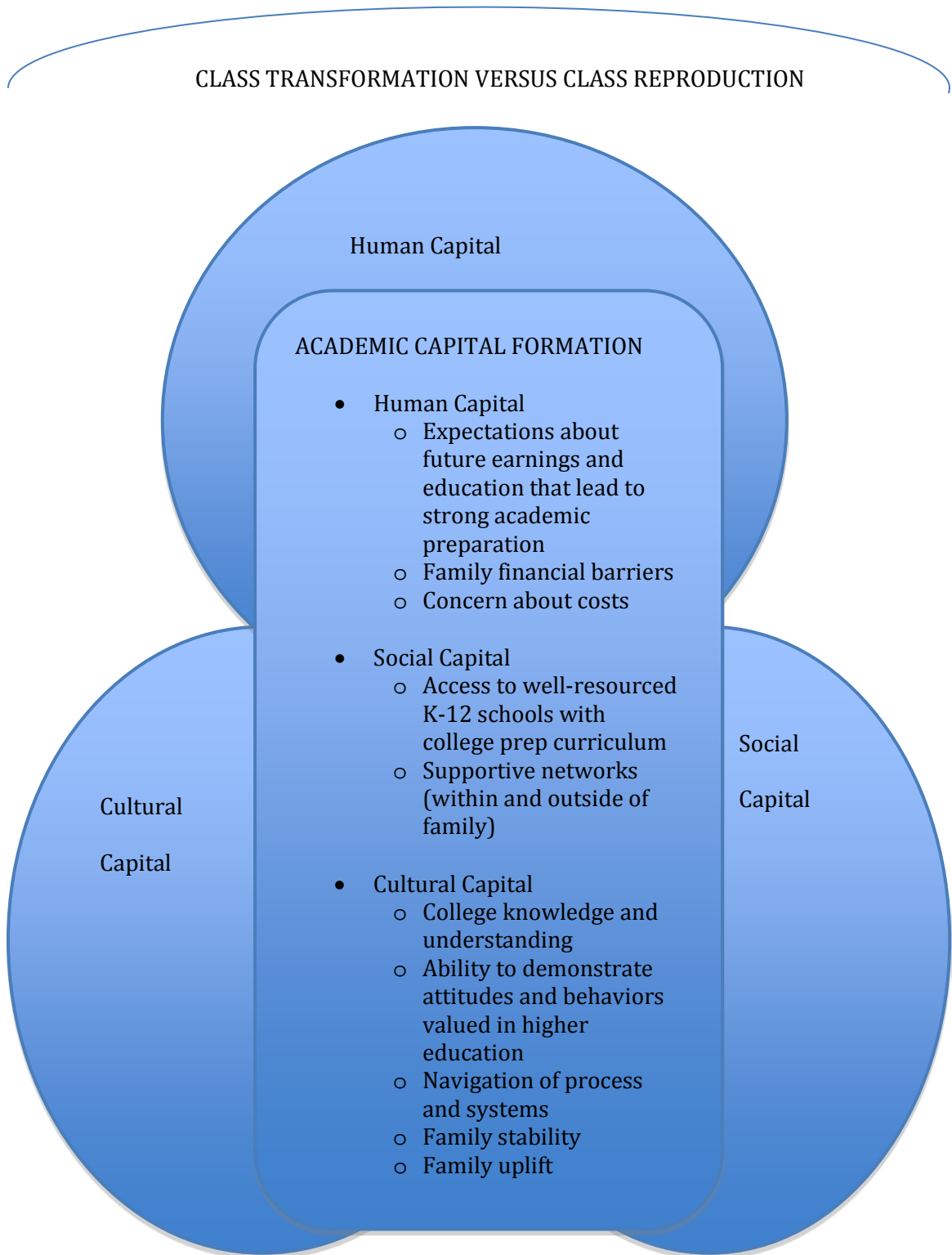
work and achieving buy-in regarding their role in meeting an access mission is also likely to be challenging. Access is created (or it is not) through interactions. It is not stagnant. Yet, by faculty members not being able to see themselves as actors in an access mission, it is hard to imagine that much will change.

Faculty had generalized notions about access and who deserved access to the public good, but were less likely to specify who deserved access. However, when discussing which students they preferred to work with, specificity became apparent with regard to academic ability, cultural capital, and other skills and attitudes. Findings from this study suggest faculty expectations are deeply rooted in personal experience and preconceived notions, yet they play a significant role in student access and success. Educating all faculty members about the issues of access does not mean that each one must take it upon him or herself to solve the problem. There are many worthy areas for improvement but a goal to help more members of the faculty understand their role and implications of their actions must be a priority of the university in order to make a difference. While workshops for faculty are unlikely to produce results, infusing information and resources about student access into graduate student professional development may be one possibility in reaching the newest members of the faculty.

**Figure 4: Social Processes Integral to Academic Capital Formation (St. John, 2012)**



**Figure 5: Social Processes Integral to Academic Capital Formation Reconsidered**



## **Recommendations**

Implications and recommendations based upon findings of this study are grouped by those for the faculty itself and for administrators who can assist and guide faculty and institutional priorities. The recommendations section concludes with considerations for future research and ways to build upon the findings of this study.

### **For Faculty**

Faculty members should reconsider their role within faculty-student interactions and the powerful effect they could have by being proactive in working with students. Faculty members should realize that an “ivory tower” or reactive approach is out-of-touch with the ways in which students expect to interact with faculty or have experienced communication previously. In other words, faculty members could contribute significantly to students’ understanding of faculty expectations and help students potentially to be more successful as a result of their efforts.

Faculty members also should reflect upon their educational experiences and consider how their expectations are reflective of their personal beliefs. Understanding how they make sense of their own expectations may help faculty members calibrate expectations appropriately. They also may find ways to clearly communicate expectations through their own reflections about how they learned certain skills and behaviors that they value among students. Finally, this understanding could help faculty members recognize how their preferences to work with certain students contributes to

access and success. They also may recognize that their current practices could reflect biases that were unintentional on their part and thus reconsider how they make available opportunities for students.

### **For Administrators**

Findings from this study suggest that the faculty is interested and motivated in the public good and institutional missions. However, faculty members find it difficult to carry out day-to-day responsibilities that reflect these ideals. This is due to tension in the landscape and within their roles. Thus, one recommendation for administrators is to help faculty find ways to do what they were drawn to higher education to do in the first place. This may include changes in the rewards system for all roles that faculty play in teaching, service, research and advising and mentorship.

Administrators also may need to help facilitate conversations among faculty regarding expectations for students within today's landscape. For these conversations to be impactful, they would need to be based upon strong empirical literature and data that faculty could trust. Anecdotal evidence is not enough to challenge long-held beliefs and biases. Updated information on financial aid, academic preparation and other barriers to access could also help faculty better understand students and their needs. It also would be important to make the resources available for faculty in multiple formats, in order to accommodate the differences among faculties.

Administrators may also want to consider options for infusing information about student access into graduate student professional development opportunities or curriculum. Providing tools and information to graduate students who are preparing to join faculty is one way to reach faculty before they become overwhelmed with the many demands of faculty life.

### **For Future Research**

The research for this study generated an abundance of data that should be further analyzed and considered for additional insight into the faculty perspective of access at Midwestern University. Analysis comparing and contrasting view points of the various faculty groups would provide further insight into the notion of field and its importance in understanding expectations regarding cultural capital. Faculty participants could be grouped by gender, age, rank, first-generation status, and discipline. Discipline categorization could also be reconsidered to compare and contrast science and nonscience faculty perspectives. I made many attempts to secure a larger sample of business faculty, but was unsuccessful in gaining additional interviews beyond two. Further analysis regarding this predicament and additional efforts to secure participants from similar disciplines or professional-based areas could enhance the study. Considering the same context (Midwestern University), it also would be useful to secure a sample of non-tenured faculty, specifically professors of practice to learn more about the differences in perspectives based upon role at the university.



Beyond the current study's context, a multiple case study of other land-grant institutions would help to confirm, negate or evolve findings. Further analysis about the importance of context and field could be drawn from a multiple case study where variables of politics, leadership, and the institutional goals differed. Along the same vein, studies of faculties at other types of institutions could be similarly fruitful in understanding the full scope of access. Faculty expectations and biases likely affect all students regardless of institutional type.

Finally, an important contribution to the access literature would be to understand the perspectives of high school guidance counselors or other key players in the high schools (e.g. coaches, advisors, teachers of AP and Honors courses) regarding their views of the purpose of college education. Additionally, learning about how these groups understand college faculty expectations could complement and advance this study, while providing additional insight into the access puzzle. Overall, more empirical work considering faculty opinions and perspectives of access and success is needed to better understand the complexity of issues. Faculty perspectives are essential as is the additional aspect of success in providing the tools for change and advancement.

### **Final Comments**

Faculty participants in this study were gracious with their time in order to participate and seemed genuinely interested in the topic of access and mission. They indicated passion and loyalty to their work and a commitment to their students. Even if

they did not fully understand the biases and preconceived notions that they brought with themselves into the academy, the fundamental belief in the public good mission is hopeful in making progress in the access challenge.

I concluded each interview with a question about the faculty member's educational path, which proved to be the most interesting part of the interview because these notions and biases could often be connected back to personal stories and experiences. As with the many students who enter the university with various backgrounds and stories, there are comparable circumstances and accounts among the faculty. This realization was important to my personal understanding and appreciation of the faculty, which just as easily as students can face categorization based on stereotypes.

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**APPENDIX A**

Observation – Initial request

Dear Dr. XXXX:

My name is Renee and I'm a Ph.D. candidate in the Higher Education and Leadership program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I'm currently conducting research as a doctoral student for my dissertation study entitled: "Faculty Perceptions of Access: A Case Study" (IRB #20120712764). This research explores tenured and tenure-track faculty perceptions of the issues surrounding access to higher education. I plan to interview 30-40 faculty members from a variety of departments across campus. To learn more about faculty in your discipline and to better understand academic culture, I'm contacting you to inquire about the possibility of observing a faculty meeting.

My request stems from the fact that your department has been identified as one that has a high (or low) number of undergraduates who are low-income, a student group that is considered to have faced barriers to college enrollment. (or My request stems from the fact that your program is identified as an access program.)(or My request stems from the fact that the meeting you led was identified as one that may significantly contribute to my understanding of faculty culture.) Soon I'll be contacting individual faculty members in your department (or affiliated with your program) requesting an interview. I hope that by observing a faculty meeting my interviews with faculty more productive.

During the observation, I will record general notions of how topics are discussed. I will not identify participants of the meeting or record the discussion verbatim. Information gained as a result of the observation will be kept confidential and only used for purposes of this research study, presented in a non-identifiable, summary form in the research findings. This study has been approved by the UNL Institutional Review Board. In addition to being a graduate student in the department of educational administration, I work full-time in academic administration. I do not handle promotion and tenure files.

I think the observation of (insert name of meeting) will greatly inform this study. I would be happy to phone you to talk about the project, if there is any other information you would like to help in your decision about granting this permission.

I very much look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,  
Renee

Renee Rodriguez Batman  
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Educational Administration

**APPENDIX B**

## Participant E-mail Interview Invitation

Dear Professor XXXX:

My name is Renee and I'm a Ph.D. candidate in the Higher Education and Leadership program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I'm currently conducting research as a doctoral student for my dissertation study entitled: "Faculty Perceptions of Access: A Case Study" (IRB# 20120712764). This research explores tenured and tenure-track faculty perceptions of the issues surrounding access to higher education. The faculty perspective is lacking in the field and I hope to rectify this by gaining insight from faculty members like yourself. The results of my study should prove interesting to researchers and practitioners, such as public policy makers.

I'm inviting your participation in this study because you were identified as a tenured (or tenure-track) faculty member in a department that has a high (or low) number of undergraduates who are low-income, a student group that is considered to have faced barriers to college enrollment. I think your experiences will inform this study and I'd like to schedule an interview with you at your earliest convenience.

The interview is estimated to take approximately 60 minutes of your time. I'm happy to come to your office if you're comfortable with this location or I'll arrange for a small conference room in the Union. This study has been approved by the UNL Institutional Review Board and the names of individuals will be kept confidential during the research process and in the presentation of the study findings. In addition to being a graduate student in the department of educational administration, I work full-time in academic administration. I do not handle promotion and tenure files.

I would be happy to phone you to talk about the project and have provided more details via the full Informed Consent Form attached below. If there is any other information you would like to help in your decision about participation, please don't hesitate to ask.

I very much look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,  
Renee

Renee Rodriguez Batman  
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Educational Administration

**APPENDIX C**

## Email Interview Invitation – Second Request

Dear Professor XXXX:

I hope you received my previous e-mail. My name is Renee and I'm a Ph.D. candidate in the Higher Education and Leadership program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I'm currently conducting research as a doctoral student for my dissertation study entitled: "Faculty Perceptions of Access: A Case Study" (IRB #20120712764). This research explores tenured and tenure-track faculty perceptions of the issues surrounding access to higher education. The faculty perspective is lacking in the field and I hope to rectify this by gaining insight from faculty members like yourself. The results of my study should prove interesting to researchers and practitioners, such as public policy makers.

I'm inviting your participation in this study because you were identified as a tenured (or tenure-track) faculty member in a department that has a high (or low) number of undergraduates who are low-income, a student group that is considered to have faced barriers to college enrollment. I think your experiences will inform this study and I'd like to schedule an interview with you at your earliest convenience. If you'd prefer to not participate in this study, please just let me know.

The interview is estimated to take approximately 60 minutes of your time. I'm happy to come to your office if you're comfortable with this location or I'll arrange for a small conference room in the Union. This study has been approved by the UNL Institutional Review Board and the names of individuals will be kept confidential during the research process and in the presentation of the study findings. In addition to being a graduate student in the department of educational administration, I work full-time in academic administration. I do not handle promotion and tenure files.

I would be happy to phone you to talk about the project and have provided more details via the full Informed Consent Form attached below. If there is any other information you would like to help in your decision about participation, please don't hesitate to ask.

I very much look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,  
Renee

Renee Rodriguez Batman  
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Educational Administration

**APPENDIX D****Demographic Questionnaire  
Faculty Perceptions of Access: A Case Study**

Your responses to this questionnaire will be used to confirm information provided by the institution (when applicable) and may be used as a part of the final narrative of the study. Your name will not be associated with your responses in the final narrative.

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your race/ethnicity?
3. Please list your postsecondary and graduate degrees, educational training, and year of completion.
4. Are you a first-generation college graduate?
5. How many years have you been a faculty member? How many years have you been at MU?
6. What is your current apportionment assignment?
7. In what term did you most recently teach an undergraduate course? What course did you teach?
8. Do you have or have you held an administrative appointment at your institution or in your department? If yes, please name the position/positions.



## APPENDIX E

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES - Department of Educational Administration

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### **Informed Consent Faculty Perceptions of Access: A Case Study**

We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

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*Purpose:* This study is being conducted for the purpose of research and to meet the requirements of a doctoral program of study. It examines issues related to access to higher education from the perspective of tenured and tenure-track faculty at a Midwestern land-grant, research extensive institution.

*Procedures:* Participation in this study involves a brief demographic questionnaire and answering several interview questions, during a single one hour interview. The demographic questionnaire will be sent to you by e-mail upon confirmation of your participation and can be completed in less than five minutes. The interview can take place in your office or I'm happy to schedule a private conference room at the Union or library. Interview questions pertain to your interactions with students and opinions regarding issues surrounding the issue of access to higher education. This interview will be audiotaped with your permission. In addition, if you're willing to grant permission, your course syllabi and documents from your website (if applicable) may be used as secondary data. A draft of the thematic analysis will be sent to you for your comment.

You're being asked to participate in this research because you are a tenured or tenure-track faculty member in an identified department that has a high or low number of undergraduate majors who are Pell Grant eligible, one characteristic of students who often face barriers to higher education. Your apportionment or recent assignment of teaching undergraduates may mean that you have had interactions with students that will inform this study.

*Risks and/or discomforts:* There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

*Benefits:* You may find the written report, which you will receive, helpful as you consider certain policies, programs and activities. The information gained will inform research about access to higher education.

*Confidentiality:* Your participation (or indication of non participation) and any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. Our

communication is within a software client that is password protected. The data collected during the study will be stored on a password protected computer and will only be seen by the investigator and transcription service. A pseudonym will be assigned after accuracy is verified of the transcription and this transcript will be used during data analysis. Data files related to the study will be maintained for three 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 under pseudonyms with only a general reference to the position you hold (e.g. tenure-track faculty member).

*Compensation:* There is no compensation for participating in this research.

*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. You may contact the investigators at any time, Renee Rodriguez Batman, rbatman2@unl.edu, (402) 880-6738 or Brent Cejda, bcejda2@unl.edu, (402) 472-0989. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 for the following reasons: you wish to talk to someone other than the research staff to obtain answers to questions about your rights as a research participant; to voice concerns or complaints about the research; to provide input concerning the research process in the event the study staff could not be reached.

*Freedom to withdraw:* Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska- Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The researcher is a graduate student in the department of educational administration and works full-time in academic administration. The researcher does not handle promotion and tenure files.

*Consent, right to receive a copy:* You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this study. Your response to this e-mail to schedule an interview certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form at the time of the interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ Initial if you agree to be audiotaped during the interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ Initial if you agree for course syllabi, or other documents available on your website to be used as secondary data in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Participant*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

***Name and Phone number of investigator(s)***

*Renee Rodriguez Batman, MA, Principal Investigator*

*Brent Cejda, Ph.D., Secondary Investigator*

*Cell: (402) 880-6738*

*Office (402) 472-0989*

## APPENDIX F

### Interview Protocol

#### Faculty Perceptions of Access: A Case Study

I'm here to talk with you about your interactions with students and your perceptions of the issues surrounding access to higher education.

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Topic Domain: Behaviors of faculty interacting in higher education with students, opinions and beliefs of what should happen with access.

#### Questions:

1. Tell me about your role at the institution and your interactions with students.
  - a. What was your most rewarding student interaction that you've had in your career?
    - i. Tell me more about your experience and why it was rewarding.
    - ii. Describe the student. (How do you think these characteristics, if any mattered in your interaction?)
    - iii. Would you describe the student as a typical student or an outlier? Why?
  - b. Describe a student interaction where you struggled to work with a student.
    - i. Tell me more about your experience and why the interaction was challenging.
    - ii. Describe the student. (How do you think these characteristics, if any mattered in your interaction?)
    - iii. Why do you think he/she was acting in this way? Or not acting in the way you expected?
    - iv. What were the indicators that the interaction was going to be challenging?
    - v. At what point did you "turn off" from the student?
  
2. How would you describe the mission(s) of MU? What does this mean to you? (How did MU's mission influence or relate to your job selection?)
  - a. Is there a time where you've seen this mission enacted? (e.g. through admissions standards, goals, access programs)
  - b. Is there a time when you've seen this mission challenged?
  - c. How familiar are you with University programs related to increasing student access to higher education? (e.g. McNair, TRIO, WHT?)
  
3. Have you ever talked with a high school student about the importance of going to college, and what did you say? (Or If you were talking to a high school student, why do you think it is important to go to college?)
  - a. What would you tell the student about why it was important to major in your discipline?
  - b. What is your perspective about the value of these conversations? To students? To the institution?
  - c. What should the University do to help students get to college?
  - d. What should the State do to help students get to college?

4. Now I'd like for you to reflect on the educational path of yourself or someone close to you (spouse, partner, child, niece/nephew). What was memorable about your or his/her educational path?
  - a. How do you think that it would be different today? Or would it not? Why?
  - b. What about the type of institution? Would you or he/she select the same type of institution? Why or why not?
  
5. Is there anything else you'd like to share regarding your thoughts about increasing access to higher education for students?