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Institutional Governance of New Program Development at Public Research Universities

by

Nathan Brad Miller

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

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(Educational Leadership and Higher Education)

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Institutional Governance of New Program Development at Public Research Universities

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University of Nebraska, 2013

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Central university administration is often involved with guiding new programs through university and state approvals. A number of factors affect these processes. No studies discuss the role of central administrators in program approvals, however. This study addresses the gap through interviews with 13 individuals responsible for new program approvals in the provost’s office of 12 Research University/Very High public institutions. Five primary themes emerged in the interviews. The themes were used to frame discussion on the purpose, barriers, and self-described roles of the participants. Partial findings from this research were reported in Miller (2013).

Dedication

Thank you to my wife, Julie, for her patience as I completed this project, Dr. Grady for making sure the game piece was always moving forward, the unofficial cohort for the moral support, and the folks at *Planning for Higher Education* for showing an early interest in the research.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – Introduction …………………………………………………………..….......1

Purpose Statement …...…………………………………………….………....................7

Chapter 2 – Literature Review ………………………..……………………....................8

Curriculum Development....………………………………………….……................8

State Approval Policies…………………………………………………….................9

Institutional Approval Policies ………………………………………….…..............10

Professional Organizations ……………………………………………………….11

Periodicals……………………………………………………………………...…12

Monographs on Postsecondary Administration and Management ……………….……13

Gap in the Literature ……………………………………..……………................14

Chapter 3 – Methodology …………………………………….…………..…….................15

Qualitative Method ……………………………………………………................16

Sampling Method …………………………………………..…………..................17

Procedures ……………………………………………………….….……................19

Data Collection …………..……………………………………………….................20

Data Analysis ………………………………………………………….................22

Data Reporting..……………..…………………………….………….................23

Validation Techniques ………………………………………………...…................23

Institutional Review Board Approval ……………………………………….................24

Ethical Considerations ……………………………….……………………...………24

Limitations …………………………………...………..……………….................24

Researcher Reflexivity …………………………………….....……...……………25

Chapter 4 – Participants and Institutions ……………………………………………..27
  Participants………………..…………………………………………………...27
    Dr. Jones ……………………………………………………………...27
    Dr. Smith………………………………………………………………27
    Dr. Turner……………………………………………………………..28
    Dr. Mills……………………………………………………………….28
    Dr. Owens…………………………………………………..…………29
    Dr. Andrews………………………………………………….……..29
    Dr. Neate………………………………………………………………29
    Dr. Laurie…………………………………………………..............30
    Dr. Easton……………………………………………………………..30
    Dr. Thompson…………………………………………………………30
    Dr. Harris……………………………………………………………...31
    Ms. Williams…………………………..……………………….…….31
    Dr. Young……………………………………………………………..31
    Summary………………………………………………………………31
  Institutions………………………………………………..……………….33
    Central Plains University……………………………………………...33
    East University……………………………………………...............35
    East State University…………………………………….............36
    North Central University………………………………………………37
    North Central State University…………………………….............38
    West University………………………………………………………….39

West State University……………………………………………………………40

South University…………………………………………………………………41

North University…………………………………………………………………42

North State University………………………………………………...............43

Middle Plains University……………………………………………...............45

East Plains University……………………………………………………………45

Summary……………………………………………………………………………46

Chapter 5 – Themes………...……………………………………………………....50

Internal Communications……..…………………………………………………...54

Institutional Fit……………………………………………………………………...55

Avoid Duplication…………………………………………………………………..56

Sustainability………………………………………………………………………..57

Institutional Goals…………………………………………………………………..58

External Influences…………………………………..……………………………58

Business and Advisory Groups…………………………………………………..58

Other Postsecondary Institutions………………………………………………...62

Evaluation of Peers…………………………..…………………………….....62

Education Councils……………………………..……………………………65

Multi-institutional Degree Programs……………..…………………………66

State Boards and Accrediting Bodies……………………………….................67

Other State Institutions………………………..………………...............68

State Level Administration…………………………..……………………70

Accreditation Requirements…………………………..…………...............73

Multidisciplinary Partnerships……………………………………………………........76

  Recognized Importance…………………………………………………………76

  Resulting Communications……………………………………………………77

  Limits of Central Administration Participation……………………….............78

  Administrative Barriers to Multidisciplinary Program Development…………...79

  Graduate School or College as an Administrative Home for Multidisciplinary Programs……………………………………………………………..82

  Top Down Initiatives……………………………………………………………83

Financial Considerations……………………………………………………..…85

  Financial Requirements for Developments………………………………………85

  Holds on Developments…………………………………………………………88

  Investment in Programs…………………………………………………………89

  University Budget Models………………………………………………………92

Recommendations from the Participants……………………………………........96

  Pilot Methods……………………………………………………………………96

  Process Improvements……………………………………………............100

    Simplification of Forms……………………………………..…..............100

    Definition of Terms…………………………..………………………..100

    Definition of Roles…………………………..……………………..............101

    Closing Degrees……………..…………………………………..............104

    Software Solutions……………..………………………………..............104

Chapter 6 – Discussions and Future Research……………………………………….107

Internal Communications……………………………………………………...107

External Influences……………………………………………………………108

Business and Advisory Groups…………………………………………....108

Other Postsecondary Institutions………………………...…………………..110

State Boards and Accrediting Bodies………………………….…………….112

Multidisciplinary Partnerships……………………………………………….…..114

Top Down Initiatives…………………………………………………….….…..116

Financial Considerations……………………………………………………117

Recommendations from the Participants……………………………………...122

Future Research…………………………………………………………………124

Conclusion………………………………………………………………………127

References ..…………..…………………………………………………………128

Appendix A – Invitation to Participate in the Study …………………………………...135

Appendix B – Informed Consent Form ………………………………...………....136

Appendix C – Interview Protocol …………………………………………...............138

Appendix D – Institutional Review Board Approval Letter ……………...…………140

List of Tables

Table 1 Participant Pseudonyms, Institutions, and Titles…………………………….32

Table 2 Summary of the Program Approval Process at Central Plains University…..34

Table 3 Summary of the Program Approval Process at East University……………..35

Table 4 Summary of the Program Approval Process at East State University……….37

Table 5 Summary of the Program Approval Process at North Central University…...38

Table 6 Summary of the Program Approval Process at North Central State University ……………………………………………………………………39

Table 7 Summary of the Program Approval Process at West University…………….40

Table 8 Summary of the Program Approval Process at West State University………41

Table 9 Summary of the Program Approval Process at South University……………42

Table 10 Summary of the Program Approval Process at North University…………....43

Table 11 Summary of the Program Approval Process at North State University……...44

Table 12 Summary of the Program Approval Process at Middle Plains University…...45

Table 13 Summary of the Program Approval Process at East Plains University……...46

Table 14 Summary of the Program Approval Process at Sample Institutions…………47

Table 15 Themes, Subthemes, and Key Words……………………………………..50

List of Charts

Chart 1 Frequency of Coded Statements for Each Theme 53

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The administrative functions tied to program development vary between institutions. There are common catalysts for change, however. Miller (2013) noted that:

> Program development at postsecondary institutions is dynamic, expanding and contracting in response to internal and external factors. This was recently evident following the 2008 recession when, as a result of funding cuts, many state legislatures focused on closing programs. (p. 45)

This economic downturn caused funding shortfalls in state budgets and resulted in lower state appropriations for postsecondary institutions. In response, underperforming and duplicated programs at public institutions were discontinued in order to balance university budgets. This approach was evident at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, where plans were made to terminate the Master's program in Classics, teacher certification in K-12 Art Education, and the Department of Industrial and Management Systems Engineering (Perlman, 2011). Legislators and university administrators in the state of Missouri took similar actions, 72 programs at the public four-year postsecondary institutions—18% of those offered—were discontinued (Missouri Department of Higher Education, 2011).

Another indicator that program viability is susceptible to external influence is the popularity of degrees among students. Interest in programs is affected by economic events; students are drawn towards a degree as the market demand increases for a skill set and turn-away as job prospects slacken. This is made evident by juxtaposing the change in computer and information sciences degrees conferred between 1998-2004 and 2004-2008. There was 94.6% growth in the number of graduates from 1998 to 2004, as Internet businesses expanded, and, following the ‘tech bubble burst’ in the early 2000s, there was a 36.1% decline in the number of graduates from 2004 to 2008 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Although “lean economic times often prompt a focus on program reduction, these actions are usually met with resistance from faculty and run contrary to broader goals of fostering academic growth” (Miller, 2013). Harvey Perlman, Chancellor of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, recognized this conflict in an open letter addressing his 2011 budget/program reduction proposal. In this document Chancellor Perlman expressed that “cutting our way to greatness is not a recipe for success” (Perlman, 2011). In this line of thought, Miller (2013) observed that:

> To stay relevant, universities must update degree offerings and alter programs of study to incorporate new and emerging knowledge bases. This allows institutions to further advancements in academia and be responsive to societal needs. (pg.45)

The importance of program maintenance and the factors involved with this process were first reported in Miller (2013) on page 45:

> Proper program maintenance requires an awareness of the factors that influence these decisions, a balance between suspending and creating programs, and the involvement of several layers of administration and faculty. Lee and Van Horn (1983) describe the need for academic planning and the necessity of cross-institutional responsibility:

> Given the expected future of educational institutions and the complexities of the current and anticipated future externalities, it will be increasingly important for schools, departments, institutes, offices, and their chairs, directors, deans, and the like, to not only participate in management planning but also to be ready to accept the results. (p. 13)

Understanding the complex hurdles facing program management at postsecondary institutions is the charge of all involved parties and is important for establishing growth.

A strong grasp of the administrative processes tied to program management aids in judicious program development. A well-informed approach to academic planning should include a calculated enhancement of program offerings. Without this, degree options grow stagnant. In contrast, institutions that foster new research and incorporate emerging knowledge in their programs remain current. This approach better prepares students to take an active role in their field.

Central to proper program management is program development, which is divided into two steps: curriculum development and program approval. Curriculum development is the responsibility of the faculty, the stewards of the discipline, and program approval is an administrative function that involves university governance and state regulations. Although much has been written about the former, there is little research on the latter. To properly plan for future growth, it is important to develop an understanding of the administrative requirements for program approval.

To plan for future growth, it is important to develop an understanding of the thoughts on the administrative functions in program approval by those actively involved in the process. Furthermore, a strong grasp of the administrative processes tied to program management aids in judicious program development.

A well-informed approach to academic planning should include a calculated enhancement of program offerings. Without this, degree options grow stagnant and fail to provide graduates with exposure to contemporary advancements in their field. Hypothetically, in the past thirty years, a university faculty that did not develop computer science degrees, failed to adopt surgical improvements in their nursing and physician curriculum, or ignored international market changes in their business courses would be irrelevant to their peers and students. In contrast, institutions that fostered new research and incorporated emerging studies in their courses provided their students access to current developments and programs, better preparing them to take an active role in their field upon matriculation.

The catalysts for new programs include student and faculty requests, endowments from private donors that establish a professorship or an emphasis in an area of study, and advancements in a discipline that lead to new specializations. Cohen (2009) noted the influence of these change agents in the creation of nine doctoral programs for the California State University system in the 2000s, which were developed in response to both internal student demands and external market projections. Keller (1983) compared this type of institutional response to a biological model, one where the organization adapts to its environment in order to survive. The increased availability of black studies, gender studies, and ethnomusicology programs, in addition to expanded language offerings, also serve as evidence of the inclusion of new paths of inquiry as a reaction to demands from within and without.

The role of administrators in the development of academic programs is to guide the program through university and state approvals. Although universities and states have different processes for these approvals, each allows for faculty governance and approval by the accrediting state board. In addition, postsecondary administrators are finding it increasingly important to understand program approval processes in multiple states. On October 29, 2012, the Department of Education (DOE) released rulings that clarified regulations for attaining state approval to operate when delivering education across state borders. These changes also altered the criteria for participation in Title IV funding. Adherence to Title IV regulations is essential for most colleges and universities, as these funds include Pell Grants, Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education Grants, and Federal Perkin Loans. A large number of students receive money to attend postsecondary institutions from these programs—in the second quarter of the 2011-2012 academic year, over 5 billion dollars was awarded in Pell Grants alone (Federal Student Aid, 2012). Without this aid, there would be a dramatic decline in enrollments, further limiting institutional funding.

In the preamble to the new regulations, the DOE justified their actions by citing the need to guard against lapses in state licensing agencies, which happened in California and resulted in a period with no state regulation board, and the desire to prevent degree mills (Department of Education, 2010, November 1). The DOE's focus on non-accredited institutions and degree mills can be interpreted as a response to the growing number of proprietary institutions. Even though a few praise the efficiency of the for-profit institutions, unscrupulous business practices, accounting procedures, recruitment tactics, and student loan default rates have been the source of complaints (Cohen, 2009). Moreover, the increase in online education caused alarm among some legislatures, resulting in questions on how to properly accredit online programs and how to manage the various regulations for interstate enrollments (Cohen, 2009). Colleges and universities from all sectors—not just for-profit, online institutions—found fault with the rulings, however.

One requirement that caused concern is the need to attain approval to operate from all states where a student is located although receiving instruction. Previously, institutions interpreted that state approvals were triggered by the presence of a physical building. In the context of distance education, the clarified rules make it necessary for institutions to gain approval to operate from each state in which they have a student taking an online course, however. The second requirement that caused concern was the short lead-time allowed to complete the task of seeking additional state approvals. The DOE letter deemed that all schools be in compliance by July 1, 2011, or nine months following the ruling. The need to seek approval from additional states presented an extensive administrative undertaking during a time that budgets and staff positions were being cut. As such, The DOE's actions directly affect institutional growth planning and required changes to operating procedures for seeking state approvals to operate. Therefore, studies that augment the body of research on administrative requirements for new program approval are valuable resources for administrators of institutions that operate across state borders.

Another requirement in the October 2010 DOE letter was for institutions to report on graduates' Gainful Employment. Although the DOE was initially denied the right to gather this information by the federal court system, they have renewed efforts to instate the requirement (Field, 2013). As such, institutions may seek out alignment of program outcomes and possible employment opportunities. This would weigh on the development process. An understanding of how institutions currently address program development and these types of external influences will aid in judicial program management.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to describe the approval process for new programs at Research Universities/Very High, with a focus on the administrative process after curriculum development was complete at the departmental or college level. The central question for this research was: How do academic officers describe the administrative approval process for new programs? The specific research questions were:

1. What is the process for new program development at your university?
2. What external factors influence new program development at your university?
3. If tasked with designing a process for new program development from scratch, what would it entail?

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

New program approval is not often cited in the literature. Database searches for research articles containing terms related to program approval (not curriculum development) resulted in few ‘hits’ of value. Therefore, to build a broader understanding of the topic, the sources reviewed for this research addressed the topics of curriculum development, state approval regulations, university resources that outline institutional approval processes, papers written for professional organizations, periodical coverage of new and emerging programs, and information on academic planning in postsecondary administration and management monographs.

Curriculum Development

The curriculum development literature review for this study was first reported in Miller (2013):

> Studies of the curriculum in postsecondary programs are abundant. While they provide little insight into the administrative approval process, they do provide information on the front end of program development, which aids in placing administrative approval for new programs in the context of the overall process. Articles and monographs exist on curriculum development, change management for curriculum, curriculum organization, and a multitude of other subcategories of interests (Cowan, George, and Pinheiro-Torres 2004; Jansen 2004; Morris,

> Haseltine, and Williams 2007). The curricula these writings address are bounded by a number of parameters; they have been dedicated to specific disciplines, countries, and institutions, all with the goal of establishing best practices for course and degree creation.
>
> Articles on multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary programs include information on the role of university administration in program development. The lack of a single line of approval through one college requires increased coordination across the university. As a result, reviews of multidisciplinary endeavors often describe the role of central administration in the process. The need to place these programs in an academic home, the role of the provost in the planning stages, the outcome of waning administrative support, the restrictions due to academic structures and traditions, and the need for proper resourcing are often addressed in articles on multidisciplinary programs (Abbot 2001; Manathunga, Lant, and Mellick 2006; McFadden et al. 2011; Newswander and Borrego 2009; Reed, Cooper, and Young 2007; Schlegel 2011; Stone, Bollard, and Harbor 2009). (p. 46)

State Approval Policies

State approval policies contain regulations that administrators must follow when they submit a new program proposal. These requirements are summarized in documents posted on government-operated websites and are valuable for understanding the mechanics of new program approvals. The provided instructions will often include summaries of the state approval board responsibilities, the general approval process, necessary forms for a proposal, and a schedule of meetings and due dates for the accrediting board. For example, guidelines and projected expenses and revenue source forms for Nebraska approvals are posted to the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education website (http://www.ccpe.state.ne.us/PublicDoc/Ccpe/LegalRegs/Chapters/RulesRegsChpt4.asp); schedules, forms, and policies are available for Missouri on the Missouri Department of Higher Education website (http://www.dhe.mo.gov/academic/); and the Kansas Board of Regents website supplies a policy statement for new program approvals and includes curriculum and budget forms for the state of Kansas (http://www.kansasregents.org/new_program_approval). There are variations in the content posted to state websites, but a basic overview of the state approval process is usually available. Knowledge of this material is vital for understanding the role of the administrator in the approval process.

Institutional Approval Policies

In addition to the availability of state policies online, many universities post their institutional program approval procedures on institutional websites. The information and documents available are usually intended as faculty resources, but they are accessible to the public. For instance, information on the Iowa State University process for new program development and a template for degree proposals are posted to the website for the Office of the Provost at http://www.provost.iastate.edu/acadprog/policy/newprogramapproval.html, and parallel documentation for the University of Missouri is posted to http://provost.missouri.edu/program/approval_process_ndp.html#system. These resources are not always posted to the Office of the Provost portion of a school website. The University of Iowa website, for example, contains a reference to the Iowa Board of Regents on the Office of the Provost webpage. But the approval process summary is located at the university's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences webpage (http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching/curriculum/changes_new_majors.shtml). Also, the online availability of institutional specific information is not ubiquitous; unlike the outline and template available for Iowa State University and the University of Missouri, material concerning institutional policies for new program approval is not readily available on the Kansas State University website.

Professional Organizations

The websites for the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) organization and the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) contain information relevant to the topic of this research. The SHEEO website is a valuable resource when investigating state regulations, as it contains links to state agencies, a compendium of state regulations under development, and statistics for higher education by state (http://www.sheeo.org). Quick access to the websites for state commissions and boards is readily available, reducing the time needed to locate official state government web pages. In addition, Barak (2006) completed a thirty-year study that summarized changes in state board regulations. The paper was posted as a resource on the SHEEO website.

The Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) also has resources available on their website that pertain to the broader circumstances and concurrent concerns of program approval. Of primary interest are summaries from national roundtables hosted by SCUP. No one document is focused on new program approval; however, discussion of trends and emerging challenges noted in these proceedings pertain to the overall discussion of program management.

Periodicals

Periodicals contain information and announcements about new programs. These often include commentary from university administrators or faculty about the purpose of the program and how it will serve the academic community. Newspapers published in cities with a large public university are good sources for these types of notices, as there is often a reporter assigned to cover the university. For example, *The Columbia Tribune* in Columbia, Missouri reports on new degrees or programs at the University of Missouri and the *Iowa City Press-Citizen* in Iowa City, Iowa prints similar announcements for the University of Iowa. Also, periodicals dedicated solely to higher education, such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, contain articles on program trends at postsecondary institutions. These often focus on innovative programs, program cuts, or difficulties associated with launching programs in a specific field. Beyond the basic program information provided in these types of articles, points of conversation and additional probes useful for conducting interviews were gleaned from these sources.

Monographs on Postsecondary Administration and Management

The Monographs on Postsecondary Administration Management literature review for this study was first reported in Miller (2013):

> New program approvals are occasionally mentioned in monographs on postsecondary administration and management. Commentary on the topic is often wrapped into discussions of academic planning, program review, and assessment of current programs. This insight can be applied to understand program approval, as the metrics used for reviewing standing programs are often used to vet a new program. The material included in these resources is pragmatic; advice is offered on time lines and the division of responsibilities in program development (Keller 1983; Lee and Van Horn 1983; Peterson, Dill, and Mets 1997; Tellefsen 1990). (p. 46)

Academic Administration by Sang and Van Horn (1983), *Academic Strategy* by Keller (1983), *Improving College Management* by Tellefsen (1990), and *Planning and Management for a Changing Environment* by Peterson, Dill, Mets, and Associates (1997) mention the importance of new program development for proper program management. These resources offer advice on timelines and the division of responsibilities for program development.

There is a collection of four academic planning case studies by Kieft, *Academic Planning* (1978). Kieft reviewed the procedures at West Virginia University, Western Washington University, Villa Maria College, and The Kansas City Metropolitan Community Colleges. For each, the author reviewed the steps, calendar, impetus, purpose, benefits, and difficulties of the academic planning process. Documents used by the institutions and commentary by the author on the benefits and difficulties of the prescribed methods are included. Although not wholly parallel to the current research, this study does show evidence that the manner and method of program planning and approval is not a new concern for postsecondary institutions.

Gap in the Literature

The Gap in the Literature for this study was first reported in Miller (2013):

> There is a gap in the current literature. No articles, monographs, or dissertations examine feedback from central administration on academic program approval at the university level. Beyond policy statements, process outlines, and commentary on the broad, changing landscape of postsecondary programs, there is little information on the administrative approval process that could be used to help recognize common practices, concerns, and approaches. The research presented in this article addresses this gap through the discussion of data gathered in interviews with senior academic officers of public universities in the Carnegie Research Universities/Very High classifications. (p. 46)

Preliminary, partial results from this study were reported in 2013 under the title of “Conversations with central administration: Facilitating communication and partnerships in new program development” in *Planning for Higher Education*. This was a step towards filling this gap. The following report is a complete presentation of the data gathered to address this literature gap.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

A qualitative approach has been selected for this study. Merriam (2009) noted that qualitative research is aimed at "understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). This relates to the study as it is designed to discover how university administrators describe new program approvals, in order to understand the process and how participants interpret their roles.

Creswell (2007) noted that the qualitative approach is also appropriate when "we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue" (p. 40). Although information concerning the administrative steps for new program approval are available at most university or state websites, this documentation only outlines the general steps needed for approval; it does not provide detailed insight into the benefits or drawbacks of the prescribed processes. To gain a deeper knowledge of how program approvals function, those involved with oversight of approvals were queried. Their responses provide a clearer understanding of the administrative factors involved with program approval. This information aids in extending the discussion beyond a step-by-step outline of the necessary checks and balances associated with developing a new program.

The type of data that was collected requires a qualitative approach. Interviews provide information about how participants understand, interpret, and explain their experiences. The reliance on interviews does not require a quantitative analysis; it fits a qualitative analysis (Creswell, 2007). An awareness of quantitative measures such as length of the approval process, the number of new programs in development at a given time, and the quantitative data used in exploring the viability of a new program—expected enrollments and cost to implement the program—are important, but these do not provide insight to the thoughts and interpretations of administrators responsible for overseeing program approvals.

A qualitative approach is fitting, as this type of research leads to a broader understanding of how the central question is understood by the participants (Merriam, 2009). The proposed analysis is not meant to uncover cause and effect relationships. The responses reveal common practices, frustrations, and the methods employed to navigate program approval.

Qualitative Method

Of the qualitative methods available, the current research is best suited to a case study. It is noted about this research project in Miller (2013) that:

> The research parameter of a single process—new program approval—and a focus on public doctoral-granting research institutions—Research Universities/Very High—create a bounded case within a complex system. These are qualifications that Stake (1995) indicates are important in identifying a viable case study. The benefit of a multi-institutional approach is that it provides numerous perspectives on program approval. This is essential, as the intent of the study is to provide a broader understanding of how administrators perceive new program development at different institutions. Also, the investigation relies on several types of data—

> interviews, documentation of university procedures, and state regulations— which matches Creswell's (2007) description of a case study. (pp. 46-47)

The inclusion of 13 administrators from multiple universities marks the research as a multi-site, collective case study (Creswell, 2007). The benefit of a multi-institutional approach is that it provides numerous perspectives on program approval. This is essential as the study provides a broader understanding of how administrators perceive new program development at different institutions. As Merriam (2009) noted, the more cases investigated for collective case study, the "more compelling an interpretation is likely to be" (p. 49).

Sampling Method

Purposeful Sampling was used for the research. Creswell (2007) defines this method as one in which ". . . the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research and central phenomenon on the study" (p. 125). Miller (2013) notes that:

> . . . this approach allows for the identification of individuals with a working knowledge of the new program approval process at their institution. The selected administrators have relevant experiences and are able to provide detailed information in response to the central question. Within the purposeful sample, criterion sampling was used. This method, as defined by Kuzel (1999), ensures that "all cases meet some criterion; useful for quality assurance" (p. 39). The criterion for the research sample is that the participants are academic officers

> responsible for the program approval process at a public Research University/Very High. (p. 47)

The institutional classifications indicate that the selected universities awarded at least 20 doctorates in 2008-2009 and were within the Very High per-capita research activity, as based on the 2010 basic Carnegie Classifications (http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org). These criteria ensure that the proper administrator is interviewed, the data from each site can be used to make collective deductions, and the resulting discussions are applicable to similar institutions.

Limiting the sample to public institutions means that there are additional state regulations administrators must consider when piloting a new program through the approval process. These regulations often disallow the repetition of degree programs within the same university system and require that new programs be vetted among several universities during the proposal phase. There is no assumption that the state regulations for public universities are the same from state to state; these requirements are varied and based on the unique history of each state (Cohen, 2009). The common requirement is that public institutions are held accountable to operate within the prescribed regulations of their home state, creating another factor that must be considered when seeking approval for a new program.

Three methods were used to identify participants that met the criteria above. The first method was recommendations from my dissertation advisor, Dr. Marilyn Grady. Once the initial participants were contacted and interviewed, snowball sampling was employed. This method, as defined by Merriam (2009), involves asking participants if they would be willing to identify possible leads for individuals that meet the sample criteria. In addition, participants were identified through their position titles and descriptions. Many universities have websites for the Office of the Provost that include detailed descriptions of staff responsibilities. These job duties often include information on the assistant, associate, or vice provost responsible for program development and review.

The total number of participants for this study was 13. This number was identified as an appropriate sample size to facilitate discussion and understanding of the factors that administrators face although addressing program approvals. Cases are reported anonymously in the findings and discussions.

Procedures

The procedures for this research follow the recommendations provided by Creswell (2007). After the identification of the case study as an appropriate method, steps include: purposeful sampling and the selection of cases, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation or data reporting. To identify appropriate cases, I relied on the boundaries established for the study. There is no literature on how university administrators approach new program approval, so this criteria was needed to bound the study and establish parameters for contacting possible participants. Once identified as meeting the sample criteria, individuals were contacted through an email that outlines the topic of the research and requests an interview. (See Appendix A for a sample of the invitation to participate email.) Those who agreed to be interviewed responded directly to the email or had their administrative assistant contact me and recommend a time that I could visit. The interviews took place at the time and location of the participants choosing. The following sections of this document detail the remaining research procedures identified by Creswell: data collection, data analysis, and data reporting.

Data Collection

Case studies involve the collection of data from numerous sources. For this study, this includes process documentation, available reports on new program approvals, and interviews with administrators responsible for the process. Before conducting interviews, I reviewed the program approval process for each university. The purpose of this was to become familiar with the process at each institution. From this material, I gained a deeper understanding of the situations that may be referenced in the interviews, and I had a better understanding of the interview responses. The reviewed documents include state regulations available on the state government website and outlines of the university process posted on the university website. These procedures were summarized for future reference and logged in a participant specific folder. In addition, searches of local and university periodicals were completed in advance. Searches of these databases yielded information on university specific program reductions and approvals, which provided insight into the context of each case.

At the start of each interview, the participants were asked to review an informed consent document that outlines the research purpose, procedures, risks and/or discomforts, benefits, confidentiality, compensation, opportunity to ask questions, freedom to withdraw, consent, right to receive a copy of the transcription, and permission to record the interview. (See Appendix B for the informed consent document.) Once the participant agreed to take part in the interview, the participant signed two consent forms.

One copy was returned to the investigator and the other copy was given to the participant. Once permission was granted, the interview was audio recorded with a digital device, placed in plain view of the participant. Each interview was between 50 and 85 minutes.

The data collected from interviews is vital for understanding the inner workings of new program approval. A protocol based on the template suggested by Creswell (2007) was used for each interview. This document included date, participant, and time information for each interview, an introduction to the interview, a list of the questions and prompts for the interview, and a space to record notes during the interview. (See Appendix C for a copy of the interview protocol.) The purpose of the protocol was to provide directions for the interview and make notes on the responses of the participants.

The questions and prompts for the interviews were piloted after IRB approval for the research project was received. Following the pilot, no changes were made to the questions and prompts as the resulting data provided interesting insights and viable paths of discovery for the topic.

In addition to the questions and probes, the participants were asked to elaborate on the topics they mentioned during the interview. The freedom to explore topics raised by the interviewees outside of the pre-planned questions is referred to by Merriam (2009) as a *semistructured* interview. This is a “format that allows the researcher to respond to the topic at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriamm, 2009, pp. 89-90). Subjects that were catalysts for diversions from the research questions in the pilot included situations cited as examples of standard operating procedures, discussion on abnormalities in the process, and steps of the approval process not included in the collected college or state documentation.

Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed with the assistance of computer software that allows the speed of the recording to be slowed, which permits accurate transcriptions. Once data were transcribed, open coding began. Open coding allows the researcher to be open to any codes and ideas that may be presented in the data (Merriam, 2009). As codes emerged in the transcripts' notes, they were grouped into broader themes. Following the recommendations for category construction from Merriam (2009), the themes are responsive to the research, exhaustive, mutually exclusive, named in a sensitive nature, and conceptually congruent. Data was then organized according to the themes.

Although the codes for each interview were similar, they were not exactly the same; there was some variation in topics brought forth by the participants. Creswell's (2007) cross-case analysis method was used to cross-analyze the contexts and themes from the 13 cases. The Creswell process allowed for in-depth discovery of each participant's experience, and treated each case independently before analyzing cross-case themes and making assertions and summaries for the broader study. As a result, the hindrance of theme development due to the use of pre-prescribed codes was avoided. The cross-case data analysis process resulted in the in-depth portrait of the central question and allowed me to describe common practices and provide recommendations for the new program approval process and future research.

The collected documents related to approval process for each university were referenced during coding. Reliance on the collected approval process documents prompted a deeper understanding of the institutional context of each case, allowed further comprehension and interpretation of the ideas brought forth in the interviews, and provided information that assisted in cross-analyzing the cases.

Data Reporting

The data is reported with thick, rich, descriptions in the following chapters of this document.

Validation Techniques

Five validation techniques were used in this study: triangulation, high exposure to the data, member checking, rich description, and an external audit. Interviews with administrators and document collection aided in understanding and achieved triangulation. Themes encompass the collected data and were verified and crosschecked between the data sources.

The research process involved a high exposure to the data. One method that established this goal was a review of the context of each case before and after the interview. This served as a preparation for the interview and for the analysis process. Also, I transcribed the interviews, which increased my exposure to the data.

I conducted member checking by sending copies of the transcriptions to the participants. They were asked to review the document and to provide clarification as needed. The clarification was incorporated in the final manuscript.

Thick, rich descriptions are reflected in the final manuscript. Creswell (2007) noted that “thick, rich description allows the reader to make decisions regarding the transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants or setting under study" (p. 209). My dissertation advisor, Dr. Marilyn Grady, conducted an external audit of the findings.

Institutional Review Board Approval

The University of Nebraska Institutional Review Board granted approval for this research on September 30, 2011. (See Appendix D for a copy of the IRB approval form.)

Ethical Considerations

The informed consent document and identifying the purpose of the research were the methods used to avoid ethical concerns (Creswell, 2007).

Limitations

The limitations associated with a case study include the use of the researcher as the primary data collection tool and data analysis tool, reliability, validity, and generalizability (Merriam, 2009). Care was taken to review each case independently and assure that important data are not overlooked. High exposure to the data and continued review of the case context and interview responses were essential in ensuring this takes place. My limited experience with conducting interviews may be a factor, however. To avoid this limitation, methodologies were reviewed and pilot interviews were conducted.

Five validation techniques were employed to ensure reliability and validity. These techniques were triangulation, high exposure to the data, member checking, rich description, and an external audit. The research was confined to the information the participants shared during the interviews and the information contained in the process documents.

Additional limitations of this research were reported in Miller (2013):

> A qualitative study does not lead to generalized findings. The common experiences of the participants are reported, and these form the basis of the discussions and implications. Additional limitations are the small sample size (13) and the bounded case. The process of . . . program development at public doctoral-granting institutions may be different from that at other types of public institutions or private institutions. (p. 59)

Researcher Reflexivity

Interpretation plays a significant role in a qualitative study (Stake, 1995). It is important to reveal my interest in the topic and my biases about the topic. My interest in program approval process is what Stake (1995) referred to as intrinsic; it grew out of an interest in a particular case, specifically the reduction of programs in the University of Missouri system in 2010 and 2011. As a three-time graduate of the state's flagship university and a longtime resident of Columbia, MO, the town where the university is located, I followed the news closely. Many friends, acquaintances, and former professors were directly impacted by the ongoing discussion and the call for evidence to show cause to maintain low performing programs. As I read the news coverage and spoke with those who were involved, I began to ponder program approval. My thought was that the institutional focus cannot always be on reduction, or the university would become obsolete. Moreover, soon after initiating my studies at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, I received an email, which was sent to the faculty, student body, and staff, from

Chancellor Perlman outlining program reductions at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln.

In addition to my exposure to the program reductions at the University of Missouri and the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, I developed a curiosity about the state approval process for postsecondary institutions. This was due to my contact with these issues at my place of employment, the Division of Adult Higher Education at Columbia College in Columbia, MO. I was promoted into a directorship for this division shortly after the release of the 2010 Department of Education Program Integrity Ruling, which addressed regulations for Title IV funding. With 35 nationwide sites, the DOE decision directly affected our departmental operating procedures, and was the topic of formal and informal conversations.

The biases I have about the degree approval process are not strong. At the start of this research, I knew too little to adequately form an opinion. However, my previous knowledge about the various state regulations for program approval led me to believe that there would be different methods within the selected sample of institutions.

CHAPTER 4

Participants and Institutions

The following chapter summarizes the participants and their institutions of employment. This information provides context for the findings discussed in Chapter 5.

Participants

Participants were selected using the purposeful sampling method outlined in Chapter 3. Documentation for new program approvals on the institutional websites indicated the participants were responsible for shepherding the process at the time of the interview. The title and scope of duties for each participant at the time of their interview are reported below.

Dr. Jones. Dr. Jones is the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies at Central Plains University. His field of study is Animal Sciences. Dr. Jones has been with the university since 1990 and held administrative positions at the college level including the role of Assistant Dean. He was appointed as the Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Studies in 2007. In his current role, Dr. Jones is responsible for assessment, faculty orientation, general education, international programs, new undergraduate degree proposals, undergraduate course proposals or changes, and eLearning. Dr. Jones's interview for this study took place on October 26, 2011, in his office on the campus of Central Plains University.

Dr. Smith. Dr. Smith is the Vice Provost for Advanced Studies and Dean of the Graduate School at Central Plains University. His field of study is English and he has been with the university since 2002. Previous administrative positions at the university include Director of Graduate Studies for the English Department and the Assistant and Associate Dean for Graduate Studies. He was appointed to his current position in 2010. In this role, Dr. Smith is responsible for graduate education, graduate and professional course proposals and changes, graduate research assistants, and graduate degree proposals. Dr. Smith's interview for this study took place on December 20, 2011, in his office on the campus of Central Plains University.

Dr. Turner. Dr. Turner is the Deputy Provost and Associate Dean of the Faculties at East State University. Her field of study is Communications and she was appointed to Faculty Development and Advancement in 2004. Previous administrative positions at the university include Associate Dean at the college level and Assistant and Associate Dean of Students. In her current role, Dr. Turner is responsible for interpreting and communication of academic policy, policy implementation, resolving academic grievances, assisting in program development, facilitating external reviews, and coordinating with the state Board of Governors. Dr. Turner's interview for this study took place on February 17, 2012, in her office on the campus of East State University.

Dr. Mills. Dr. Mills is the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs at East University. His field of study is Mathematics. He joined the university in 1989 and former administrative roles include Chair at the department level, and Associate Dean at the college level. In his current role, Dr. Mills is responsible for general education, teacher education, undergraduate research, undergraduate honors programs, and is the point of contact for undergraduate program development. Dr. Mills' interview for this study took place on February 20, 2012, in his office on the campus of East University.

Dr. Owens. Dr. Owens is the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean for Undergraduate Studies at North Central State University. His field of study is Pathology and he has been with the university since 1983. Previous administrative positions include Director of Medical Technology and Associate Dean for Student and Academic Affairs. In his current role, Dr. Owens is responsible for oversight of undergraduate education including advising colleges on undergraduate education, implementing and evaluating new initiatives, and implementing undergraduate policies. Dr. Owens' interview for this study took place on May 30, 2012, in a conference room of his office suite on the campus of North Central State University.

Dr. Andrews. Dr. Andrews is the Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Budget Planning and Executive Director of the Office of Budget and Planning at North Central University. Her duties include oversight of the Office of Budget and Planning and serving as the point of contact for new program development for the Provost's office. Dr. Andrews' interview for this study took place on June 1, 2012, in a conference room at her office suite on the campus of North Central University.

Dr. Neate. Dr. Neate is the Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at West University. His field of study is Chemistry and he has been with the university since 1989. Previous administrative positions include Program Director for a program at the National Science Foundation. In his current role, Dr. Neate facilitates classroom planning and funding, faculty hiring and tenure, program review, and new program approval. Dr. Neate's interview for this study took place on June 25, 2012, in his office on the campus of West University.

Dr. Laurie. Dr. Laurie is the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at West State University. Her field of study is Sociology and she has been at the university since 1990. Previous administrative positions include Chair at the department level. In her current role, Dr. Laurie is responsible for personnel policy, faculty appointments and tenure, accreditation activities, academic success and engagement, assessment and institutional research, libraries, and the Reserve Officer Training Corps. Dr. Laurie's interview for this study took place on June 26, 2012, in her office on the campus of West State University.

Dr. Easton. Dr. Easton is the Vice Provost of Instruction and Dean of Arts and Science at South University. His field of study is Biology and he has been with the university since 1979. Previous administrative positions include Acting Registrar and Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Programs. He has been in his current role since 1997. His duties include liaison with the state Regents for Higher Education, curriculum issues, assessment, and serving on the general education committee. Dr. Easton's interview for this study took place on July 16, 2012, in his office on the campus of South University.

Dr. Thompson. Dr. Thompson is the Associate Provost for Academic Programs and Dean of the Graduate School at North State University. His field of study is Aerospace and he has been with the university since 1974. Previous administrative positions include chair at the department level and Associate Dean at the college level. He was appointed to central administration in 2004. In his current role, Dr. Thompson is responsible for the graduate college and various aspects of academic programs at the university including assessment, recruitment, and retention. Dr. Thompson's interview for this study took place on August 27, 2012, in his office on the campus of North State University.

Dr. Harris. Dr. Harris is the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education at North University. Her field of study is Economics and she has been with the university since 1988. Previous administrative positions include Associate Dean at the college level. In her current role, Dr. Harris is responsibilities include outcomes assessment, the center for teaching, learning space governance, student academic services, and the honors program. Her interview for this study took place on August 28, 2012, in her office on the campus of North University.

Ms. Williams. Ms. Williams is the Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs at Middle Plains University. Her fields of study are Psychology and Education. In her current role she advises general education, new student programs, academic advising, and course and program approval. Ms. Williams' interview for this study took place on October 31, 2012, in her office on the campus of Middle Plains University.

Dr. Young. Dr. Young is the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education at East Plains University. Her field of study is French and she has been with the university since 2006. In her current role, Dr. Young's duties include undergraduate curricular policies, general education, and enhancements to undergraduate education. Dr. Young's interview for this study took place on November 11, 2012, in her office on the campus of East Plains University.

Summary. The titles and responsibilities of the participants vary at the sample institutions. New program approvals are only a portion of their duties. There is not a common field of study or length of service at the university among the interviewees. Table 1 provides a summary of participant pseudonyms, institutions, and titles. This table is reported as published in Miller (2013).

Table 1

Participant Pseudonyms, Institutions, and Titles

Pseudonym	Institution	Title
Dr. Jones	Central Plains University	Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies
Dr. Smith	Central Plains University	Vice Provost for Advanced Studies and Dean of the Graduate School
Dr. Mills	East University	Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs
Dr. Turner	East State University	Deputy Provost and Associate Dean of the Faculties
Dr. Andrews	North Central University	Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Budget Planning
Dr. Owens	North Central State University	Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean for Undergraduate Studies
Dr. Neate	West University	Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Dr. Laurie	West State University	Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Dr. Easton	South University	Vice Provost for Instruction and Dean of Arts and Sciences
Dr. Harris	North University	Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of the University College
Dr. Thompson	North State University	Associate Provost for Academic Programs and Dean of the Graduate College
Ms. Williams	Middle Plains University	Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs
Dr. Young	East Plains University	Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

Institutions

All the institutions fall within the bounded-case parameters outlined in Chapter 3. The criteria for the research sample in the study are that the participants are academic officers responsible for the program approval process at a public Research University/Very High. The institutional classifications indicate that the selected universities awarded at least 20 doctorates in 2008-2009 and were within the Very High or High per-capita research activity as based on the 2010 basic Carnegie Classifications (http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org). The size, general administrative structure, and a summary of the program approval process at each university are reported below. The process summaries are gleaned from documents posted to the institutions' websites. These summaries show examples of the difference in administrative requirements between the universities and the type and depth of information made public and readily accessible on university websites.

Central Plains University. Central Plains University is a land-grant institution and the largest university in a four-institution state system. The university is comprised of seven colleges with an enrollment of 26,995 undergraduate students and 7,752 graduate students. The Provost is the chief academic officer of the university and the Chancellor is the chief executive officer. The university system is governed by a System President who reports to a board with oversight of the university system. Table 2 outlines the program approval process at Central Plains University as presented in documentation posted on the institution's website.

Table 2

Summary of the Program Approval Process at Central Plains University

Stage	Steps
Preparation	• Draft program proposal using state guideline • Complete university system forms • Obtain approval for the program as per originating unit policies • Submit the program to the Office of the Provost and request review and approval
University Approval	• Associate Provost and Director of Budget review financial data • Forward the program to either the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Faculty Senate or the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies and the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee • Approval forwarded to the Provost • Provost review and recommendation made to Chancellor • With Chancellor approval, program is submitted to system level Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) with copy to all parties above and the Registrar
System and State Approval	• VPAA shares program with other schools in state system. Concerns returned to Provost for appropriate revisions. • VPAA makes recommendation to the oversight board • With oversight board approval, program sent to State Higher Education Board for review by all state schools for 21 days • Program submitted to State Higher Education Board for approval at their next meeting • VPAA notified of decision by mail • VPAA copies Provost on board of education decision

Final Approval and Initiation	• Provost distributes copies of board of education approval letter to original department, departmental approvers, university approvers, Registrar, and Office of Institutional Research • Registrar updates course catalog

East University. East University is a land-grant university and one of the largest universities in the United States. The university is comprised of 16 colleges with 33,754 undergraduate students and 16,332 graduate students. The Provost is the chief academic officer of the university and the President is the chief executive officer. The President reports to a Board of Trustees. In addition, there is a Board of Governors that oversees the twelve-institution state system. The Board of Governors was recently established (2002) and defers some decisions to the university Board of Trustees, including most new program approvals. Table 3 outlines the program approval process at East University as presented in documentation posted on the institution's website.

Table 3

Summary of the Program Approval Process at East University

Stage	Steps
Pre-Proposal	• Vet the pre-proposal through the college • Submit to Provost's Office • Considered by Provost staff and the Provost • Approved for inclusion in university workflow
Proposal	• Submit to College Curriculum Committee • Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs reviews for policy consistency • Submit to Sub-Committee of the University Curriculum Committee for in-depth review

	• Submit to University Curriculum Committee • Submit to Faculty Senate Steering committee for inclusion on senate agenda. Requires two readings, first as an information item, second as an action item. • Sent to Provost for inclusion on Board of Trustees (BOT) agenda • If approved by BOT, sent to Board of Governors for notification and approval if over 120 credit hours in the program • Notification sent to Office of Institutional Planning and Research • Notification to accrediting body for approval

East State University. East State University is in the same state as East University. The university is comprised of 16 colleges with 32,303 undergraduate students and 8,535 graduate students. The Provost is the chief academic officer of the university and the President is the chief executive officer. The university is governed by a Board of Trustees and a state-wide Board of Governors that oversees the 12 state institutions. The Board of Governors defers some decisions, including most program approvals, to the Board of Trustees. There are two East State University campuses, the main campus and a satellite campus. Table 4 outlines the program approval process at East State University as presented in documentation posted on the institution’s website. The approval process at East State University is in two stages. The first is a proposal to explore, and the second is a proposal to implement. Many of the steps are the same for both processes.

Table 4

Summary of the Program Approval Process at East State University

Stage	Steps
Proposal to Explore	• Faculty develop the proposal • Review by department curriculum committee and chair • Review by college curriculum committee and dean • Review by Dean of Undergraduate Studies or Graduate Policy Committee • Review by Dean of Faculties and Provost
Proposal to Implement	• Faculty develop proposal • Review by department curriculum committee and chair • Review by college curriculum committee and dean • Review by Dean of Undergraduate Studies or Graduate Policy Committee • Review by Dean of Faculties and Provost • Sign-off by Library, accrediting body liaison, and Diversity Compliance • Review by Board of Trustees • Review of professional degrees, Ph.D., and any degree requiring more than 120 hours by the Board of Governors (BOG) • Implement degree and inform BOG

North Central University. North Central University is the oldest public university in the state. The university is comprised of three campuses with four colleges. The enrollment is 27,979 undergraduate students and 15,447 graduate students. The Provost is the chief academic officer of the university and the President is the chief executive officer. The university administrative structure includes the Board of Regents. There is no state board of higher education, but the public, state universities participate in a Presidents' Council. Table 5 outlines the program approval process at North Central University as presented in documentation posted on the institution's website.

Table 5

Summary of the Program Approval Process at North Central University

Stage	Steps
Department and School/College	• Follow department, school, and college policies to begin • Dean of school or college discusses program with Provost
Graduate School	• Submit graduate programs to graduate school • Review by graduate school executive board • Submit to Presidents' Council
Provost's Office	• Submit undergraduate programs to Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Budgetary Affairs
Board of Regents (BOR)	• Review by BOR only if a new degree level for the academic unit
Presidents' Council	• Submit to Presidents' Council, which includes representation from all state, public, research universities

North Central State University. North Central State University is a land-grant university in the same state as North Central University. The university is comprised of 19 colleges with 36,747 undergraduate students and 10,247 graduate students. The Provost is the chief academic officer and the President is the chief executive officer. The university is supervised by a Board of Trustees. There is no state board of higher education, but the public universities in the state participate in a Presidents' Council. Table 6 outlines the program approval process at North Central State University as presented in documentation posted on the institution's website.

Table 6

Summary of the Program Approval Process at North Central State University

Stage	Steps
Pre/Early Development	• Consult dean • Dean to discuss with Provost
Academic Unit	• Develop program • Submit to college curriculum committee • Submit to dean
University	• Submit to University Curriculum and Catalog Office for approval by University Committee on Undergraduate Education or University Committee on Graduate Studies • Submit to Office of the Provost • Submit to University Committee on Curriculum • Submit to Faculty Senate
External	• Submit to Presidents' Council, which includes representation from state, public, research universities, via Provost

West University. West University is the flagship university in the state. The institution is comprised of four colleges with 20,892 undergraduate students and 3,762 graduate students. The Provost is the chief academic officer at the university and the President is the chief executive officer. There is no university board of trustees or regents. New programs are vetted through a Provosts’ Council, which includes representatives from all public universities in the state, and the state board of higher education, which oversees the nine institutions in the state university system. Table 7 outlines the program approval process at West University as presented in documentation posted on the institution’s website.

Table 7

Summary of the Program Approval Process at West University

Stage	Steps
Preparation	• Submit synopsis to Provost • Develop full proposal • Review within proposing unit per unit policies • Submit to relevant dean
University	• Submit to Office of Academic Affairs and the Vice Provost for Graduate or Undergraduate Studies • Submit to undergraduate or graduate council for review • Review of individual courses by Committee on Courses • Review of proposal by Vice Provost for Undergraduate or Graduate Studies • Submit to Provost for approval • Submit to University Senate for approval
State	• Submit to Provosts' Council • Submit to State Board of Higher Education

West State University. West State University is in the same state as West University. The institution is comprised of two campuses with 12 colleges and a combined undergraduate and graduate enrollment of 26,393. The Provost is the chief academic officer at the university and the President is the chief executive officer. There is no university board of trustees or regents. New programs are vetted through a Provosts’ Council, which includes representatives from all public universities in the state, and the state board of higher education, which oversees the nine institutions in the state university system. Table 8 outlines the program approval process at West State University as presented in documentation posted on the institution’s website.

Table 8

Summary of the Program Approval Process at West State University

Stage	Steps
Primary	• Academic Programs Committee Preliminary Meeting • Library Evaluation
Senate	• Budget and Fiscal Planning Committee Review • Graduate Council Review • Curriculum Council Review • Faculty Senate approve via Executive Committee
State	• Submit to Provosts' Council • External review (if graduate degree) • Submit to State Board of Higher Education

South University. South University is a land-grant institution comprised of two campuses and 21 colleges. There are 20,010 undergraduate students and 3,630 graduate students at the university. The Provost is the chief academic officer and the President is the chief executive officer. The university has a Board of Regents. In addition, there is a state level Board of Regents that oversees the 25 state colleges and universities. Table 9 outlines the program approval process at South University as presented in documentation posted on the institution’s website.

Table 9

Summary of the Program Approval Process at South University

Stage	Steps
Academic Unit	• Department develops • Submit to college dean for approval
University	• Submit to graduate college if graduate degree • Preliminary review by Provost and Vice Provost • Submit to Academic Programs Council and subcommittee for approval • Provost's approval • Submit to Board of Regents for approval
State and Accrediting Bodies	• Submit to State Regents for approval • Notify Higher Learning Commission for approval • Notify university coordinator of academic publications to implement program

North University. North University is comprised of 12 colleges with 21,999 undergraduate students and 9,499 graduate students. The Provost is the chief academic officer at the university and the President is the chief executive officer. There is no institutional Board of Trustees or Regents. The state Board of Regents oversees six state universities and schools. In addition, there is a Council of Provosts that reviews new programs across the state. Table 10 outlines the program approval process at North University as presented in documentation posted on the institution's website.

Table 10

Summary of the Program Approval Process at North University

Stage	Steps
College	• Consult with associate dean and other impacted departments • Review by college-level education committee and executive committee • Submit to Provost
Provost	• Provost review and submit to Board of Regents (BOR)
BOR	• BOR approval • Advertise new degree and inform Registrar, Admissions, and Academic Advising Center of addition

North State University. North State University is a land-grant institution in the same state as North University. The university is comprised of eight colleges with 25,553 undergraduate students and 5,487 graduate students. The Provost is the chief academic officer and the President is the chief executive officer. There is no institutional Board of Trustees or Regents. The state Board of Regents oversees six state universities and schools. In addition, there is a Council of Provosts that reviews new programs across the state. Table 11 outlines the program approval process at North State University as presented in documentation posted on the institution's website.

Table 11

Summary of the Program Approval Process at North State University

Stage	Steps
Department	• Intent to develop programs submitted to Provost every Spring • Proposal presented to departmental faculty or interdepartmental group • Consult with college dean • Faculty recommendation submitted to college-level committee and administration
College	• Review by College curriculum committee, faculty, and dean's cabinet • Submit recommendations to Graduate College Curriculum and Catalog Committee (for a graduate degree) or to the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee
Graduate College	• Review of new Master's or Doctoral programs by Graduate College Curriculum and Catalog Committee, Graduate Council, and Graduate Dean. • Submit recommendations to Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee
University	• Review by Faculty Senate curriculum Committee • Submit to Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Council • Submit to Faculty Senate • Submit to Provost
Board of Regents	• Submit to Council of Provosts and Board of Regents

Middle Plains University. Middle Plains University is a land-grant institution. The university is part of a three-campus system and comprised of 12 colleges. There are 31,932 undergraduate students and 10,673 graduate students at the institution. The Provost is the chief academic officer of the university and the Chancellor is the chief executive officer. The three-campus university system is led by a President and a Board of Trustees. Table 12 outlines the program approval process at Middle Plains University as presented in documentation posted on the institution's website.

Table 12

Summary of the Program Approval Process at Middle Plains University

Stage	Steps
College	• College or School approves proposal
Graduate College	• Forward graduate programs to Graduate College • Letter of approval issued
Council on Teacher Education	• Forward to Council on Teacher Education if it is a P-12 certification program
Provost and Senate	• Forward to Provost • Review by Senate Educational Policy Committee • Review by Full Senate
Board of Trustees	• Provost forwards to Board of Trustees via Chancellor and President
State Board of Higher Education	• Submit to State Board of Higher Education via Assistant Vice Provost of Academic Affairs • Provost issues approval letter

East Plains University. East Plains University is the flagship institution in the state. The university is part of an eight-campus system and comprised of two colleges; the primary academic units are 14 schools. There are 31,892 undergraduate students and

4,927 graduate students at the campus. The Provost is the chief academic officer on the campus and also a Vice President of the university system. The eight-campus system is led by a President and a Board of Trustees. Table 13 outlines the program approval process at East Plains University as presented in documentation posted on the institution's website.

Table 13

Summary of the Program Approval Process at East Plains University

Stage	Steps
Department and College	• Department initiates proposal with faculty recommendation • Dean sends proposal to school policy group for approval
Campus	• Submit to Campus Academic Officer (CAO) • Review by Campus Curriculum Committee typically requested by CAO
University	• Academic Leadership review including Technical Committee, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Leadership Committee, and approval of Executive Vice President of all system campuses • Submit to Board of Trustees
State	• Approval processed by State Commission for Higher Education • Notification to accrediting bodies may be necessary

Summary. The information provided for the each institution shows differences in the administrative structures and new program approval processes across the sample. These dissimilarities result in variations in new program development and the role of the provost's office. Table 14 provides a summary of these differences. This table is not meant to be an exhaustive review of the differences, but a summary of process variations between the institutions. The data in the following table was first reported in a table with enrollment figures for each institution in Miller (2013, pp. 48-51).

Table 14

Summary of the Program Approval Process at Sample Institutions

Institution	Permission to pursue program from Provost required before development	University Curriculum Committee Approval Required	Full Faculty Senate Approval Required	Campuses in University System and the Role of Other Campuses in Approval Process	Institution Governing Board Approval	State Board Approval
Central Plains University	No, program submitted to Provost following college development	Yes, following completion of financial projections	Graduate Faculty Senate approval required for graduate degrees, Undergraduate Curriculum Committee approval required for undergraduate degrees	4, program shared with other campuses before approval with oversight board pursued	Yes, oversight board approval required	Yes, Department of Higher Education approval required
East University	Yes, approval of a pre-proposal required before submission to University approval process	Yes, following college approval	Yes, following curriculum committee approval	1	Yes, Board of Trustees approval required	Board of Governors notification of new program required, approval required for any program over 120 hours
East State University	Yes, program must go through a majority of approval system as a proposal to explore before being submitted as proposal to implement”	No, must be signed by college curriculum committee and either Dean for Undergraduate Studies or Dean of Graduate Studies before Provost signature, Graduate Policy Committee of the Faculty Senate approval required for graduate degree	No mention of university faculty senate in process documentation for undergraduate degree, Graduate Policy Committee of the Faculty Senate approval required for graduate degree	2, no mention of the role of other campuses in program approval policies	Yes, Board of Trustees approval required	Board of Governors notification of new program required, approval required for any program over 120 hours

North Central University	Discussions required during college level development, formal approval required following development	No, approval through college and discussions with the Provost	No mention of university-wide curriculum committee or faculty senate mentioned in documentation	3, no mention of the role of other campuses in program approval policies	Board of Regents approval required only if program is a new degree level (baccalaureate, graduate, doctoral) or new degree designation for the college	No Board of Higher Education in the state, President's Council, not a state agency, approval required
North Central State University	Discussion required, general consent needed before program pursued, formal approval following Undergraduate or Graduate Education Committee approval	Yes, following formal Provost approval	Yes, following Curriculum Committee approval	1	No, Board of Trustees approval not required	No Board of Higher Education in the state, President's Council, not a state agency, approval required
West University	Submission of synopsis required before program pursued	Yes, prior to formal Provost approval, approval of Undergraduate or Graduate Council and Committee on Courses required	Yes, following Provost approval	2, no mention of the role of other campuses in program approval policies	No standing board	Yes, Provost's Council approval required and State Higher Education Board approval required
West State University	No, Provost approval not listed in process steps, but Provost office is the conduit for statewide Provost's Council	Review required before Faculty Senate approval	Yes, via Executive Committee	2, no mention of the role of other campuses in program approval policies	No standing board	Yes, Provost's Council approval required and State Higher Education Board approval required
South University	No, Provost review following college approval	Academic Program Council approves program, partial membership appointed by the Faculty Senate	Academic Program Council approves program, partial membership appointed by the Faculty Senate	2, no mention of the role of other campuses in program approval policies	Yes, Regents approval required	Yes, State Regents for Higher Education approval required

North University	Notice of programs in development due to Board of Regents each year, submitted through Provost	No, College level mentioned in available documentation, but not university level	No, College level faculty assembly must give approval, but no note of university faculty senate in available documentation	1	No standing board	Yes, Board of Regents approval required
North State University	Notice of programs in development due to Board of Regents each year, submitted through Provost	Yes, recommendations presented to full Faculty Senate	Yes, recommend-ation presented to Provost	1	No standing board	Yes, Board of Regents approval required
Middle Plains University	No	Yes	Yes, following approval from Educational Policy Committee	3, actions reviewed by University Senate Conference, which has membership from all campuses, recommend-ations returned to Provost	Yes, Board of Trustees approval required	Yes, Board of Higher Education approval required
East Plains University	No, forwarded to campus academic officer following approval of school policy group	Campus Curriculum Committee review “typically requested” by Provost following college level approval	No, Campus Curriculum Committee mentioned in documentation, but no Full Senate approval noted	8, Academic Leadership Council, composed of system level administrators, approval required	Yes, if the program requires substantial funding, otherwise it is an action item not an approval item	Yes, commission of higher education approval required if it is to be listed separately in the commission inventory

CHAPTER 5

Themes

Interviews were transcribed and coded per the methods described in Chapter 3. Codes were then grouped into themes and subthemes with a focus on conceptual congruence as described by Merriam (2009). Five primary themes emerged as a result of this process: Internal Communications, External Influences, Multidisciplinary Partnerships, Financial Considerations, and Recommendations from the Participants. There are subthemes within each; they are presented in Table 16. In addition, the key words used to code each theme are included in Table 16. Following Table 16, the frequency of phrases coded for each theme is presented in Chart 1. For frequency tallies, statements may be counted for multiple themes; some statements related to more than one theme or subtheme.

Table 16

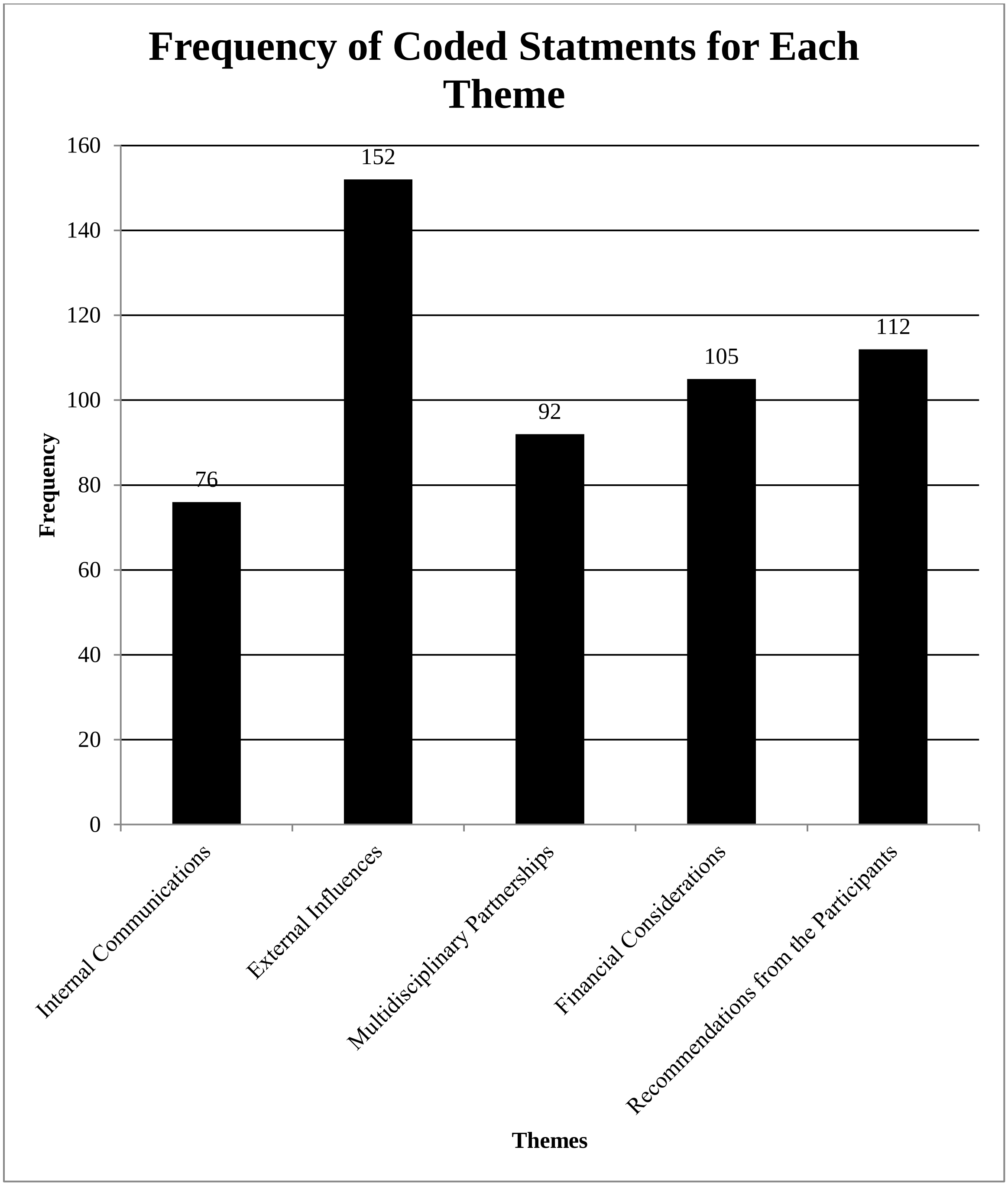
Themes, Subthemes, and Key Words

Themes	Subthemes	Key Words
Internal Communications	Institutional Fit	unofficial conversations, consensus, support, preliminary, discovery, capacity, informal, discussions, interest, initial meeting, initially, started conversations, plan, explore, application, duplication, facilitate,
	Avoiding Duplication	
	Sustainability	

	Institutional Goals	viable, start, connection, consultation, beginning, consult, first, mission, scope, fit, beginning
External Influences	Business and Advisory Groups	strength, industry, advisory, skill set, work force, market, company, commercial, external, outside, corporation agencies, board of higher education, department of higher education, state, regents, curators, trustees, state, governors, protests, support, peer, exchange, council, everyone else, cooperation, other university, scanning, Department of Education, SACS, NWCCU, regional, accreditation, commission, public institutions, colleagues,
	Other Postsecondary Institutions	
	State Boards and Accreditation Requirements	
Multidisciplinary Partnerships	Recognized Importance	interdisciplinary, cross departmental, interaction between, coordinate, partners, co-curricular, integration, intersections, recruit, talent, collaborate, diversity, networks, trans-disciplinary, multidisciplinary, together, support structure, academic home, combination, alignment, joint, administrative units, departments, silos, overlapping, boundaries, peers, cooperative
	Resulting Communications	
	Limits of Central Administration Participation	
	Administrative Barriers to Multidisciplinary Program Development	
	Graduate School or College as an Administrative Home for Multidisciplinary Programs	
	Top Down Initiatives	

Financial Considerations	Financial Requirements for Development	head count, faculty, space, revenue, net students, investment, budget, tuition, money, funding, expenses, finances, responsibility centered management, income, FTE, resources, unsustainable, sustainability, budget model, credit hours, costs, appropriations, entrepreneurial, cuts, federal funding, overhead, tax, resource management, historical budget model
	Holds on Development	
	Investment in Programs	
	University Budget Models	
Recommendations from the Participants	Pilot Methods	emphasis area, existing academic unit, small scale, major, minor, pilot, specialization, student interest, demand, track, certificate, doesn’t work, cultural lines, doesn’t fit, limited resource, innovative, constrained, slow to adapt, reinvention, proposal format, financing, streamlining, consensus, cut, software solution, workflow, central coordination, transparent, governance, interfere, distort, hoops, automated
	Process Improvements	

Chart 1: Frequency of Coded Statements for Each Theme



Internal Communications

The internal communications highlighted in the interviews focused on conversations that take place early in the development process. The topics addressed by participants were institutional fit, avoiding duplication, sustainability, and the possibility of aligning the new program with overarching institutional goals.

In many cases, before preliminary discovery conversations take place with the vice, associate, or assistant provost responsible for the process, the provost is aware there is interest in a new program. As an example, Dr. Turner stated “hopefully by the time this planning group comes to meet with me, the dean of that college has already had a discussion with the provost.” Dr. Andrews indicated that similar conversations between deans and the provost take place at North Central University. At West State University, Dr. Laurie stated that these initial conversations take place in the Provost Council which consists of the provost, associate provosts, and deans. Dr. Thompson said that the associate deans and directors met twice a semester at North Plains State University, allowing ideas for new programs to be shared with the provost’s office and the other colleges before development. Although these examples are planned meetings, information on proposed programs could come at any time or place. Dr. Young shared that a few weeks prior to the interview, she had a chance meeting with a faculty member in the airport that led to a conversation about a possible new program.

Additional findings on internal communications were reported in Miller (2013):

> Early communication between the academic units and central administration about new program developments was cited as an important aspect of the process by all participants. Participants prefer that consensus-building conversations take

place before program development begins in earnest. Administrators identified the following areas as topics addressed in early meetings: institutional fit, avoiding duplication, sustainability, and the possibility of aligning the new program with overarching institutional goals. These topics provide categories for organizing the data on the importance of early communication in the approval process. (p. 53)

Institutional fit. Findings on institutional fit were reported in Miller (2013):

Four participants highlighted the role of early conversations in vetting a new program for institutional fit. Ensuring that the program fits within the mission and scope of the institution is vital. Dr. Jones related the following:

> There can be some unofficial conversations about what do you think . . . is there general consensus that this fits Central Plains University and . . . our institutional mission and focus . . . does it belong . . . is this a concept that there is general support for?

Dr. Mills echoed these ideas, stating that preliminary contact allows for discussion on the importance of and the motivation for developing the proposed program.

Discussion of institutional fit can detour development, and, according to one participant, it should be an obvious consideration for the developers. Dr. Thompson said that negative responses to such inquiries have prompted faculty to abandon a project in the early stages of development. Dr. Neate suggested that seeking answers on institutional fit is simply part of understanding institutional culture. He elaborated by sharing that anyone who has been around a university

> long enough "knows that if you haven't checked into all of those sorts of things and gotten compelling answers, then you probably are not going to go very far." If the answers to these types of preliminary questions indicate a lack of good fit, then faculty may decide to forego further efforts. (p. 53)

Avoid duplication. Vetting these ideas early was also cited as a time saving measure (Miller, 2013). Dr. Jones revealed this purpose of early communications with the following:

> The last thing that we want them (faculty) to do is to invest so much time and then it get to the undergraduate curriculum committee and the faculty from a different division say, 'Well no we don't support this because it is the same thing that we are doing over here, and this will devastate our (program).' And if it is doing the same thing, we ought not to be doing it in the first place, and we should have discovered that in the preliminary discovery conversations we are having.

Additional findings on Avoiding Duplication were reported in Miller (2013):

> Dr. Easton shared how time lines could be extended if these conversations did not take place:
>
> > The problems occur when this little group over here decides that they want to do this and they didn't talk to this group over there, and by the time they get up to this level, that's when it collides. And then it gets pushed back down again. That is what delays the process.
>
> While in some institutions duplication may be addressed by the university curriculum committee or faculty senate, central administrators indicated that they could also assist in this area. Dr. Mills observed:

> That is another reason why we need to have preliminary discussions with the proposing college, because we have a very good idea what the programs are out there, so we would detect duplication.

Possible duplication may not halt a development, however. Dr. Andrews noted that conversations could touch upon the possibility of phasing out a current, related program to make room for the new program. Also, Ms. Williams shared that discussions on duplication could reveal other issues. For example, there may be problems with students' access to courses offered outside their college, and the new program. (pp. 53-54)

Sustainability. Findings on sustainability were reported in Miller (2013):

Sustainability is another focus of early conversations. Enrollment projections, faculty loads, and financial commitments were noted as important preliminary considerations. Ms. Williams indicated that the potential applicant pool needed to be discussed early in the process, suggesting that a program should have a broad enough appeal to pull in students. Dr. Smith was emphatic about the importance of potential enrollments and available faculty hours, stating: "If Central Plains University is going to offer it, we better have the faculty in place and there better be students out there who want to take it." Dr. Mills shared a similar concern regarding sustainability, not wanting a program to go too far down the road only to discover that it is unsustainable due to enrollment or teaching load concerns. Dr. Jones compared this line of inquiry to "chairs on a deck," explaining that it was important to consider the effect of a new program on cross-university

> enrollments. A program that pulled primarily from the enrollments of another college would likely not be approved. (p. 54)

Institutional goals. Findings on institutional goals were reported in Miller (2013):

> On a broader level, Dr. Owens suggested that he could use early conversations to encourage faculty to consider approaches that align with overarching institutional goals. He provided the following example:
>
> > We often work with new programs, depending on what their focus is and what they are all about, to try to help facilitate the faculty development of the program. So, for instance, my office has a particular mission to begin to enhance the curriculum in international or global ways. We are trying to find ways that students … get the kind of multicultural and global experience from the curriculum and cocurriculum we (as a university community) need.
>
> He also noted that he has a liaison in his office who works with programs to help instill these ideas in the current curriculum. (p. 54)

External Influences

Participants discussed several external influences. These include business and advisory groups, other postsecondary institutions, and state approvals and accrediting bodies.

Business and advisory groups. Communication between the provost's office and external organizations, such as businesses and advisory boards, during program development varied between institutions. These contacts were initiated by the university in some cases and by the outside group in others.

Dr. Smith explained the overall interest of Central Plains University in responding to the influence of businesses and the market:

> The general thought is that the campus is always interested in making sure educational programs are up to date, meet the needs of the citizenry, and respond to market conditions. So there is a market, and that push and pull between what the faculty are interested in and think they can offer, and what students are interested in, and society needs in terms of work force development.

He went on to explain that this prompts a request for input from external groups in new graduate certificate proposals.

Contact from Dr. Smith’s office with the business community was not limited to these requests, however. He used the Central Plains Edge initiative to engage businesses, bringing them on campus for symposiums in an effort to generate new ideas and directions. The questions he posed to the business entities included the desired qualities they sought in job candidates, and the possibility of culling input from current staff members with Ph.D.s in the discipline. This advice was specifically sought for developing professional science masters degrees. Dr. Smith explained that the cooperation between academia and business in that setting with the following:

> So we’ve, we’ve had extensive conversations in West Central City with the West Central City Life Sciences Institute, and with people involved in the animal health corridor in West Central City. You have employees, what would you want them to take if they were to get a masters degree or certificate? You are hiring, what do

> you want your candidates to be able to do when they finish? You have many . . . of your staff with Ph.Ds., would they be interested in co-teaching or leading modular units that our graduate students could take? Because the merger, in this case not the merger, the cooperation between industry and academia is critical to the success of the program.

Dr. Young presented an interesting intersection of academia and business. The well-regarded business school at East Plains University contracts with outside organizations to provide management consultation. The university hired the consultation services of the business school to provide project management processes for online program development. In this case, the university was both the external business organization queried for input, and the academic institute making the request.

In a few cases, the interviewees shared that industry groups or entities approached the university with ideas for possible programs. Dr. Jones detailed two such occasions. One was by an industry advisory group who was looking for degree with an emphasis on sport and sport venue management. This request was driven by a desire for students with specific skill sets in venue management. A new program was developed, but took ten years to be realized in full. The second case shared by Dr. Jones involved a large, private retail company headquartered in the state of Central Plains. Sales of the company's traditional product were slowing due to advancements in technology and communication. They wanted to develop new products that required an intersection of skills traditionally found in Journalism, English, Media, and Design programs. After approaching Central Plains University with an initial idea, a multidisciplinary degree was developed, filling the void in the market. In a similar line of conversation, Dr. Owens shared that market drivers, such as the need for graduates with a specific skill set, were part of new program development at North Central State University.

Dr. Easton shared similar examples from South Plains University. A business group approached the university about establishing new programs at one of the institution's extended campuses. Following the initial contact, Dr. Easton met with the group and select faculty to discuss the requests. This meeting resulted in faculty picking up the charge and developing new programs in technology and psychology with emphasis in business applications.

Dr. Andrews indicated that the influence from business groups is not as formal as the examples shared by Dr. Jones and Dr. Easton. The type of communication with external organizations he would expect was described with the following:

> When the dean . . . hears from a CEO that. . the graduates we are getting right now are deficient in these three areas . . . that is taken into consideration. So there is informal influence.

Dr. Mills also indicated that contact from a business groups would probably not result in new programs. He did share that certificates may be developed from these types of requests, however.

Although not necessarily responsible for the development of specific programs, participants noted the importance of communication between colleges and advisory boards. Dr. Thompson explained the role of these relationships in the following manner:

> North Plains State is the kind of university where we have, I would say, a higher percentage of our programs lead logically to certain degree paths . . . So that means it is easier for those programs to then connect to the external stakeholders

> related to what the graduates do. And by that mechanism, they keep their curricula and degree programs current, and they sort of jointly evolve new programs when there is a need.

Dr. Harris suggested that these relationships more often affected individual courses, not degree programs. She also stated that these communications did not occur centrally at North Plains University; they would be at the college level.

Ms. Williams noted various levels of involvement between the provost’s office and external organizations at Middle Plains University. Graduate and undergraduate advisory boards housed within the provost’s office had funneled feedback to the colleges about curriculum and program requests. She stated that the process of change through these channels was arduous at times, but the feedback could push faculty to be creative with program development. Ms. Williams also explained that requests from external organizations could raise concerns. The university had been offered financial support to house an academy. The offer came with stipulations, including criteria for curriculum. She stated this was an absolute non-starter for the faculty senate.

Other postsecondary institutions. The participants shared several ways that other postsecondary institutions influenced program development. These include evaluation of peers, education councils, and establishing multi-institutional degree programs.

Evaluation of peers. Evaluation of peers during program development took several forms. The first was simple inquiry and scanning of programs available at peer institutions. Dr. Smith noted that this took place at Central Plains University through a standard question, “Are our peers doing this?” Also, he reviews trade publications, such as *Inside Higher Ed*, to keep a finger on the pulse of developments at other schools. Dr. Mills noted that similar discussions took place at East University. He referred to this line of inquiry as investigating “academic fashion.” He noted that “We want to be a player in the significant areas, just like everyone else.” Dr. Owens echoed these thoughts with the following:

> Absolutely. To see not only are there programs that are similar to the one that we potentially want to offer being offered other places for the purposes of, you know, looking at need but also . . . do we need it here?

Dr. Thompson cited a specific example of a degree that had been developed due to these types of observations.

> Certainly that is where software engineering came from. Seeing that many large engineering colleges have a software engineering program that is different from computer science, that is different from computer engineering.

Dr. Neate indicated a review of similar programs was a part of the proposal process at West University. He stated that the process would include “trying to have awareness of similar programs elsewhere that have either succeeded or failed.” Ms. Williams shared a similar process at Middle Plains University:

> That typically . . . people will include in a justification . . . that there are similar programs at other institutions. And it may not be that we are trying to do the same thing that they are, but they are trying to offer the unique aspect of our program within that, and especially within the state.

Dr. Easton shared that this was part of the academic culture, and that new faculty hired on from other institutions would influence the process as well:

> People will do that all the time. It is a constant. People are looking, scanning the environment. You bring in new faculty members to the university, they come in with whatever ideas they, whatever university they came from, they may have, be doing things differently, and so new faculty will very often come up with new ideas of new degree programs that we are not doing here and kind of help catalyze new things that we weren't doing. Sometimes it is whole cloth new, sometimes it is just reorganization of what we have been doing, creating, creating tracks within existing degrees is relatively easy, so you can reorganize your courses and come up with an emphasis . . .

Dr. Owens and Dr. Laurie discussed using analytics and data from other institutions as part of the discovery process for a new program. Dr. Owens referred to benchmarking data from other universities in order to gain a better understanding of the potential viability of a program:

> . . .because we can't be everything to everybody. And so, we look, we do look a lot and benchmark against, when possible, and most cases . . . except for really cutting edge kind of things, we benchmark against other institutions and look at data from them as well. And we also look, when it comes to undergraduate programs, we look at graduate demand. Is there a demand in graduate education for these programs as well as demand in the market for careers in any of these areas, or things that this might lead to in particular areas.

Dr. Laurie noted that West State University invested in an analytics program to investigate programs at other institutions in order to help make program development decisions:

> We just invested in academic analytics. This is this large database where they look at metrics for graduate programs . . . And we look at their (peers) configurations, so it is not like we want to go in some weird new way, and we don't to just model it after anyone else, so we just try and take a look at it, to see if it makes sense in terms of program size, you know, the number of faculty, the faculty student ratio, we take a look at those metrics, and we wouldn't think of putting forward a program that is so way out of line . . .

Education councils. Dr. Smith and Dr. Turner discussed the influence of education councils on program development. Both noted the development of a professional science masters degree, which has been a focus area for the Council of Graduate Schools. Dr. Turner also mentioned this factor as an impetus for program development at the graduate level. She noted that:

> There is a push by the Council of Graduate Schools to put in to place terminal masters degrees that are less research oriented and more employment related. You get the substance of the field but then you get a mixture of courses related to how to manage projects, how to communicate, management business courses kind of mixed in.

This push by the council has influenced the development of these types of programs at East State University.

Dr. Smith noted the influence of this focus at Central Plains University as well. He stated:

> So one of the current, it is a very complicated build up effort in our professional science masters degree, which is a very popular movement around the country.

> Graduate Deans have taken a very large role in trying to figure out whether and what kind of program should be offered on individual campuses.

Dr. Smith went on to discuss how these efforts have also resulted in the university reaching out to professional science communities for input on degree development.

Multi-institutional degree programs. Dr. Mills discussed the development of two versions of co-operational programs. The first was in conjunction with institutions within the state, and the second was in conjunction with a large state school from a different region. Although these types of efforts were not mentioned by other participants, it does present a unique consideration for the influence of other institutions in the development process.

Dr. Mills noted that the development of multi-institutional programs within the state is aimed at degree completion:

> And the state is interested in universities working together for developing, to develop cooperative programs. Traditionally we've sort of resisted that, because it has not been in our DNA to do that. But I think that there are definitely advantages. So for instance, we are working on a new program, it is already in existence in your state, I think, it is sort of a program that will facilitate students who have not completed their first degree and have gone out to work. To get the opportunity to come back and complete their bachelors degree program, and this is in cooperation with, everyone is working, not every one, a lot of institutions are working together so that the student, for instance, will be able to take courses at different institutions. And they all contribute to one degree.

In this program, students will be enrolled in a public, state institution, but be able to easily take courses at other state institutions. This eases the transfer of credits and allows an easier path to degree completion.

Dr. Mills also discussed a co-operative program that was in development with another large, RU/VH institution in another state:

> Cooperating with universities, not just in the state, but actually we are working, we are talking with Southwest University on developing some again, some processes and some actual curriculum that may be shared by other Research One universities. So, the whole push to cooperative online curricula and programs is something that is taking place. So, you know, you will be able to, to be registered at Central State University but take, or registered at West Plains University, take some of your courses there and some of your courses at another institution . . . and one institution giving credit for another institution's courses and curriculum. That is something that we have shied away from, because we want to maintain our brand, right. We want to maintain our credibility and our standards.

Dr. Mills went on to explain this program was in development and that there were a number of issues that needed to be discussed in order to implement the program. Concerns included revenue sharing, enrollment reporting, and the academic culture of the institutions.

State boards and accrediting bodies. Program approval often includes state boards and accrediting bodies. Participants discussed the influence of these factors on program developments. Differences in state requirements result in variations in the process, but they shared that communication and feedback from other state institutions, state level administration, and accreditation requirements weighs on the process.

Other state institutions. The involvement of institutions within the university system in the documented program approval processes is summarized in Chapter 4. Table 14 highlights the official requirements per university documentation related to those campuses. The participants discussed the role of campuses within their university system and other state institutions, public institutions not necessarily in the same university system, in the approval process. The primary issue addressed with other state institutions is the avoidance of duplication. Dr. Jones shared this concern with the following:

> The board . . . will approve it after its been vetted with the other three campuses in our system, to make sure that, the University of Central Plains – Blue City says 'Wait a minute, this is the same degree program we have. We are going to start competing now with one another.'

Dr. Mills related a similar concern in East state. This results in the need to query other state institutions when developing a program. He shared the justification that is required if programs are to be duplicated across the state:

> This is primarily to not have a plethora of the same programs and then water-down the enrollments in these programs and create too much duplication across the state. But we also have to include justification for it. So for instance labor surveys, how is it relevant not just in the national workforce and also in the statewide workforce environments.

Ms. Williams noted that duplication would not necessarily stop a program approval. She related the state's concern with the following:

> The state actually asks you to go back and think about other institutions within the state who are offering similar kinds of programs, and then on the outside of the program what the market demands are for employment in those programs, and that is an explicit ask (sic).

Dr. Neate indicated querying other state institutions with a similar program was a requirement during development. This was not a negative in his view, as this removes any surprises when it is passed along to state level administration. To explain this, he shared the following:

> . . . if we are proposing something that really overlaps with something that West State is doing, we really ought to be talking to people at West State before the proposal goes forward, and we typically are. So I don't think there are very many surprises once it hits the provost council.

A similar requirement in North state was noted by Dr. Thompson. He stated that duplication within the state could add time to the approval process:

> And if it is a unique program that isn't offered by anybody else, that is easy. If it isn't, if it is one where there is a similar program offered at one or both of the other institutions, then there needs to be a lot more investigation of is there really a need for this. You know, I mean, is there such a demand by students that we really need to have three programs in the state. And sometimes there is. I mean, all three institutions have colleges of business; all three have colleges of

> education. The flavors are a little different . . . and they all have enrollments that make them viable.

Vetting new programs with other institutions sometimes take place at the different levels. Dr. Easton explained that feedback from other institutions in South state was facilitated by state level administrators:

> The chancellor will then notify all of the other universities in the state that SU is proposing a new program and the other colleges will have an opportunity to protest or ask questions about a new program proposal. Once that process has happened, if there are serious concerns by other institutions that will then lead to, state regent's staff will facilitate conversations between the institutions to work out the differences.

In contrast, Dr. Harris indicated it was relegated to the college level at North State:

> So the other thing that we ask the associate dean in the relevant college to do is to phone to their colleagues at NSU and UNNS to say, would it be OK if we offered a degree in criminal justice, and to get a letter of support, because the regents will ask for that.

State level administration. Approval processes at the state level vary between states. Participants discussed these requirements and how they affect program development. For example, in East state, the Board of Governors assigns approval responsibilities for all programs except those that require more than 120 credit hours. Dr. Mills shared this with the following:

> . . . because the Board of Governors has a strict rule that majors cannot take more than 120 credit hours, so if you want to have the major with more than 120, then

> you have to get Board of Governors approval, and you have to say why do you need that. And usually that is for a major that have some external professional accreditation that requires an amount of material to be covered that cannot be covered in 120.

The coordinating board responsible for state approvals in East state was disbanded for a time. Dr. Turner discussed the outcome of this period of de-regularization:

> During that period when there was no coordinating board, and there was all these individual boards, institutions started having a lot of freedom to develop degree programs that they'd always wanted to develop but they had not been enabled to do that because the centralized coordinating board, the Board of Regents, that had a really, it really did coordinate state activities. It always looked at, is this duplicating another degree in the system, and if so, that might not be approved. So there was tight control of degree development under the Board of Regents. Then people went a little crazy, right . . . which is natural, after that control.

In contrast, there is no state board in North Central state. Instead, a President's Council with membership from the 15 public universities reviews new programs. Dr. Andrews shared this part of the approval process and how it feeds back into development with the following:

> . . . review by the 15 public universities and there is a chance to comment back and forth to raise questions, which are done in a kind of collegial fashion, to say, you know we are doing something similar to that at our campus, and, you know, it doesn't look like you have enough courses in this particular area, or you haven't

> given enough thought to what the career paths are for students who graduate in this field. So there (is) a chance for additional, kind of fine tuning of the proposal, and at least thinking about issues that maybe the school or college haven't spent enough time on. So those get funneled back to the individual departments or schools.

When asked if this group could veto a program, Dr. Andrews replied: "But in the end, the universities are autonomous, they could say, I don't care what you say. I am going to do this because it makes sense for our campus, from our perspective."

Confusion about state level responsibilities was noted by Dr. Laurie. Changing regulations, pending legislation, and current lobbying efforts result in unclear procedures. She shared this climate with the following:

> We are not quite sure who the state board is and what the groups are that (sic) are approving things. We still have one, but the West University is trying to get their own board, our President is not so clear that he wants an independent board, so we are just not quite sure who gets to decide what.

In a similar line of conversation, Dr. Easton indicated that there were, at times, inconsistencies from the state administrators. He explained this as such:

> At times they (state regents) have been very reluctant to approve anything new. They have been focused on program duplication, avoiding new program duplications, concerned about costs. And then at times, depending on the compositions of the regents and the political climate, stuff just flies through and nobody pays attention to it. It just depends.

Dr. Harris noted fluctuations in state concerns as well:

> The regents kind of go back and forth on whether they care about duplication or not, so there are usually some questions about how many students do you expect to get, is there a market, will they get jobs, and then board of regents approves it . . .

Dr. Owens suggested a change in focus at the state level was a result of financial concerns:

> . . . it is getting more scrutiny about this because of, you know kind of budget cuts at institutions and the push to keep the costs of higher education down, and therefore not be duplicating a lot of programs from institution to institution. Because my sense . . . years ago is nobody really worried about it.

Dr. Young indicated there were also recent changes to the state board powers in East Plains state. Previously, they only had the power of approval, but now can disapprove programs. She shared this change by stating the following:

> And they (state board) have recently acquired the power to disapprove programs. So, at some point we fully expect to go through and say, well you know you only have so many graduates in this programs, justify why you are keeping it. You know, in some cases we are not in a good place to justify it, because we don’t do program review, we don’t know what it is costing.

Accreditation requirements. Six participants cited Department of Education, regional or special accreditation requirements when discussing program development and approvals. Dr. Smith stated that changes in regulations as a result of practices by for-profit institutions have affected the development discussions at Central Plains University. He did so with the following:

> With the department of education's, U.S. Department of Education oversight of for-profit colleges and universities really aggressively recruiting students for sometimes non-useful certificate programs the students can't complete, we have been under the kind of employment, gainful employment regulations the Department of Education put forward. What that has meant is that equally on the certificate side as on the degree production side . . . in the initial meeting I'll say 'OK, I understand, we see the societal need, I understand where we see the faculty and curricular capacity,' and those are sort of bottom line.

Dr. Turner stated that regional accreditation have changed the process at East State University. She shared that:

> . . . we incorporated SACS signature into all of our forms about a year and a half ago, maybe two years ago, when we realized that there were SACS notifications of different issues that weren't going out because the SACS person was not in the loop on these.

Dr. Neate also addressed changes in regional accreditation policies. These have resulted in changes to the approval process at West University. He stated:

> . . . but we now, our regional accreditor (sic), the Northwest Commission of College and Universities, NWCCU, they have made it clear that if there are substantial changes being made, being proposed to being made in the curriculum, and that would certainly include a new major, that they feel they to need to approve it before it can be done. And so, so we have added an additional level approval, beyond the state board of higher education, on to our regional accreditors (sic).

Dr. Owens stated that special accreditation for certain disciplines can affect the development process as well. Because of this, there has been an increased focus on degrees that require more than 120 credit hours. He related this change as such:

> For instance we have programs that require more than the 120 credits to graduate from the institution, so there's very careful questions asked about why is that. In some cases, engineering is a wonderful example, ADAT accreditation and external accrediting factors kind of put pressure on institutions to, to include a lot of things in the curriculum that they might not otherwise . . . And so we have been doing a lot of work over the last several years to very carefully look at these programs to assure, both need as well the types of requirements are appropriate for what the students are expecting for the degree.

Dr. Laurie also noted the added requirement of special accreditation for some programs. To achieve this, the accreditation factors are reviewed during development. She shared that "a program that will need, that is accredited, we'll get that so . . . for example, within animal sciences there are some fields in which they have to have accreditation."

Although the need for special accreditation may increase the steps in the development process, Ms. Williams discussed special accreditation as a selling feature or justification of a new program:

> . . . that would be something that people would reference in justification just because they thought that it helped kind of build the case. But it is not something that we have as part of our routine process. So engineering, yeah it has been a while since they had a new program, but, you know, my guess is that they would

> probably reference within the justification that this would be a program that has the potential of being accredited by ABAT. And that that, you know, is considered a selling feature.

Multidisciplinary Partnerships

The theme of Multidisciplinary Partnerships emerged in the interviews. This was first reported in Miller (2013):

> In general, program approval follows a single path, starting with faculty and moving through the college administration, university administration, university governing board, and state higher education commission or board. However, preliminary conversations may reveal the need to consult other departments, schools, or colleges during the program development process. The outcome of these consultations may be the desire or need to develop a program involving multiple academic units. The participants shared the importance of these types of programs, the resulting communications, the limits of central administration involvement in multidisciplinary program development, the administrative barriers to development, the use of the graduate school or college as a central administrative home for these programs, and the use of top-down initiatives. These topics provide categories for organizing the data on the role of central administration in encouraging multicollege partnerships. (p. 55)

Recognized importance. Findings on the recognized importance of multidisciplinary programs were reported in Miller (2013):

> The participants support multicollege endeavors. Dr. Owens indicated that providing multidisciplinary opportunities was an imperative. He related this through a discussion of Jim Spohrer, who has lobbied university administrators to assist students in spanning the fields of technology, business, and social sciences (Pratt et al. 2010). The desired skill set would result in a "T"-shaped individual, someone with deep knowledge in one discipline, but the ability to span multiple disciplines. Dr. Jones mirrored these comments in a statement about fostering a broad skill set in students. He suggested that it is important to recognize that students will need to adapt to changing employment demands throughout their career. The range of skills acquired through a multidisciplinary program can aid students in these transitions. The value of multidisciplinary programs reaches beyond preparing students for life after college. Dr. Turner stated that a multidisciplinary approach provides an advantage in securing research dollars, increasing the need to develop these connections across the university. (p. 55)

Resulting communications. Findings on the resulting communications on multidisciplinary programs were reported in Miller (2013):

> A desire to support these programs drives some of the communication from central administration. Dr. Owens explained:
>
> > And so we have to educate them (academic units and faculty) in order to be able to do that (develop multidisciplinary programs). And so, we've recently been figuring out how we can begin to introduce faculty and individuals around the campus to this kind of conceptual way of thinking

> about education and what it might look like as we begin to develop more programs.
>
> Some participants viewed creating these multidisciplinary connections as a core administrative function. Dr. Smith recalled that when reviewing a graduate certificate, he was able to expand a narrowly focused endeavor by involving interested parties from other colleges. He was careful to qualify his statement, noting that if he were to attempt to generate a certificate, it would fail. However, he could encourage faculty to reach out to others who may be interested in collaboration. Dr. Neate explained this role in terms of connecting wires. He does not create the wires, but acts as the connecting agent to see if they "spark." (p. 55)

Limits of central administration participation. Findings on the limits of central administration participation in the development of multidisciplinary programs were reported in Miller (2013):

> Participants shared that central administration involvement does vary depending on the program and players involved. Dr. Easton noted that he was heavily involved in the development of a multidisciplinary international studies program at South University, "helping to plan it, build it, and organize it, even when it was in Arts and Sciences." However, he was only just aware of a multidisciplinary religious studies program as it was developed. He supported the program, but was not involved in the planning stages. Dr. Andrews noted that she was not always privy to the conversations between colleges at the early stages; sometimes only the finished program was presented to central administration.

> Participants agreed that while the provost's office often encourages multidisciplinary programs, the primary support needs to be at the college level. Dr. Turner noted that these endeavors require increased cooperation between units, and Dr. Easton shared that there needed to be a will among the faculty to create the program. Dr. Thompson elaborated further, stating that the participants dictate the ease of the process; when people want it to work, it works. (p. 55)

Administrative barriers to multidisciplinary program development. Findings on the administrative barriers to multidisciplinary program development were reported in Miller (2013):

> There were several concerns related to multidisciplinary program development discussed in the interviews. A central issue is the lack of a well-defined process to facilitate the creation of these types of programs. In addition, discussions may result in academic units choosing not to participate, new administrative structures may need to be constructed, cultural differences between units may hinder progress, and there may be external barriers due to grants and funding.
>
> Participants shared that multidisciplinary programs require additional coordination and partnership, which is not always a well-scripted process. Dr. Jones related this idea with the following:
>
> > Where that model (program approval) doesn't work . . . is when we want to do something that is interdisciplinary. And to be quite honest with you, it is at those intersections that our graduates will spend their lives . . . so how do you do that?

Dr. Turner suggested that this concern is a truism. Faculty would agree that the program approval process does not work for multidisciplinary program development, just as they would agree that parking was not available on campus. Similarly, Dr. Young indicated that the system at East Plains University did not support multidisciplinary program development, as was evidenced by a program that had not come to fruition after four years of development.

Discussions between academic units during the development process can lead to impasses that result in changes to the roster of involved parties. Dr. Jones related such difficulties with past developments:

> It takes more time and sometimes it gets really abrasive. Sometimes, you know, a decision is made that well, these three academic units are going to move forward, and we are sorry we couldn’t shape it to get the fourth one involved and committed as a partner.

Reasons for departures are varied. Dr. Mills noted that one roadblock could be resources. If an academic unit felt that it did not have the resources to support a multidisciplinary program, then it may decline to be involved. Even with the best intentions, it is not always possible to move forward with all the academic units thought to be of interest.

To establish multidisciplinary programs, administrative structures may need to be created. There are numerous solutions to this problem, such as developing MOUs (memoranda of understanding) between colleges and sharing enrollment revenue. But developing an adequate administrative support system for a program can stall development. The participants indicated that they do not necessarily provide a solution when a development is bogged down by this issue. Dr. Neate described such a situation: There was interest in developing a program in military strategy or strategic decision making at West University, but no dean had stepped forward to provide an academic home. Nontraditional placements had been suggested, such as reporting to the provost via academic affairs; however, Dr. Neate did not think this was an appropriate solution. Similarly, Dr. Harris shared that it is up to the department of genesis to identify the academic home of a new program at North University. Also, Ms. Williams noted that when administrative structures are developed for multicollege programs at Middle Plains University, she is not in the business of brokering agreements. She is willing to provide examples of previous agreements and offer recommendations, but the onus is on the colleges to agree upon terms.

Some difficulties stem from administrative and cultural differences between colleges. For example, an issue involving the university's coding systems and degree-granting structure can lead to complications. Delays may arise from forcing programs into coding systems designed for single-college programs. Ms. Williams explained this hurdle at Middle Plains University:

> Our campus student systems process and our finance process is [sic] still very siloed, so trying to figure out a way to actualize interdisciplinary collaborations is incredibly challenging because the system wants to assign one code and do one thing . . . so trying to bridge those connections is a challenge.

> A similar barrier mentioned by Ms. Williams concerns the university's degree-granting structure. The colleges grant degrees, and a method for bestowing a single degree from multiple colleges is not in place. This can act as a deterrent to multidisciplinary program development, as it requires additional time to figure out how to manage degree conferral for the program.
>
> Administrative barriers are not all due to internal university processes; external program accreditation criteria may also create roadblocks. For example, Dr. Laurie noted issues with tenure expectations resulting from accreditation requirements in a multicollege appointment. A position was created in chemistry with a part-time appointment in pharmacy. The pharmacy school had expectations for outcomes of scholarly activities that were different from those in the chemistry department. These differences were based on the pharmacy school's accreditation, and they made it difficult to evenly distribute the position responsibilities between the two programs. Dr. Laurie indicated that these types of problems force the university to consider how tenure is awarded for multidisciplinary appointments, potentially delaying or deterring development. Program development may also be deterred if external funding sources tied to an appointment cannot be split between academic units. (pp. 56-57)

Graduate school or college as an administrative home for multidisciplinary programs. Findings on the graduate school or college as an administrative home for multidisciplinary programs were reported in Miller (2013):

> According to several participants, multidisciplinary graduate programs present fewer administrative hassles than undergraduate programs. Dr. Laurie, Dr.

> Owens, Dr. Thompson, Dr. Turner, Ms. Williams, and Dr. Young indicated that the graduate school or college was used to house multidisciplinary graduate programs. Ms. Williams suggested that the use of the graduate college eased the creation of multidisciplinary graduate degrees, as it provides a central administrative hub for the programs. Dr. Laurie noted that similar program placements took place at West State University. Also, Dr. Young noted that bachelor's to master's multidisciplinary programs were easily established at East Plains University. Specifically, bachelor's of science degrees paired with master's in education degrees were unproblematic due to the use of the graduate college as a central administrative unit. (p. 57)

Top down initiatives. Findings on top down initiatives for multidisciplinary programs were reported in Miller (2013).

> Dr. Smith, Dr. Laurie, and Ms. Williams discussed broad initiatives enacted by central administration in an attempt to encourage the development of multidisciplinary programs. These three initiatives provide examples of administrative steps taken to prompt multidisciplinary program development.
>
> Dr. Smith discussed a program called Central Plains Edge as an example of administrative efforts to encourage collaborations. The program is centered on four big-picture issues affecting the world today: health care, media, food, and energy. Faculty networks were created around these issues in an effort to secure external funding, attract students and scholars, create jobs, and improve quality of life. Dr. Smith indicated that certificates and degrees were being developed across the university as a result of these collaborations. He also stated that this

type of program is a good fit for the institution. The diversity of the academic programs at a land-grant university allows for the investigation of a problem's multidimensional aspects.

Dr. Laurie said that a reorganization process prompted by possible budget cuts was the impetus for multidisciplinary program developments at West State University. Facing a 30 percent reduction in state appropriations, the university asked the faculty to rethink the institutional structure. Based on criteria supplied by the provost, including a requirement of a minimum of 20 tenure-track faculty positions to be considered an administrative unit, the faculty were encouraged to discuss possible mergers. The budget cuts were never realized, but the realignment exercise resulted in another effort by the provost. Using the proposed realignments as a point of departure, the provost established 30 tenure-track lines and encouraged departments to submit requests based on the realignment exercise. Dr. Laurie suggested that the mergers and positions made sense in some situations, such as the combination of economics, political science, and sociology, which resulted in a new Ph.D. program in public policy. There were also proposed mergers that seemed like a good idea at first, such as the combination of agriculture with crops and soil science, that were abandoned after further review. She was surprised by some of the proposals, only to find out that discussions of a similar nature had been taking place for some time. Faculty members had been considering joint ventures in order to attract external grants and funding.

Ms. Williams shared that a former provost at Middle Plains University asked the institution to focus on multidisciplinary degrees. In response to the

> charge, central administration identified pressing societal needs that require a multidisciplinary approach. Sustainability, the environment, informatics, and health care were cited as viable options. The provost's office presented these areas of study to the college deans and asked for contributions to program development. Ms. Williams indicated that this only planted the seed; after central administration proposed the areas of study, the colleges were responsible for developing the programs. The challenge in meeting this goal was the siloed nature of the university, and the response was varied. Some units wanted to participate on a limited basis, and others wanted to house the degrees and drive the initiative. One program was established as a result of these efforts, but it was not multidisciplinary. It aligned so closely with the mission of the College of Applied Health Science that it became a single college endeavor. (pp. 57-58)

Financial Considerations

All participants mentioned financial considerations as an aspect of program development. The factors the participants discussed include financial requirements for development, holds on developments, programs as an investment, and university budget models. The information provided on these topics further explains the considerations necessary for program development.

Financial requirements for development. Documentation of the projected financial impact of a new program is required in proposals at most universities. Dr. Jones shared a number of the questions posed in order to vet this impact:

> So, head count, career opportunities and then the head count flows into a financial model, so that we can begin, you know, are we going to have, are we going to add faculty, are we going to need to add an academic advisor or career specialists, an administrative assistant? Are we going to need space? Does the space need to be renovated? What are the financial commitments we'll have to make as an institution to underwrite the program? And then are we going to have new net students to generate enough new revenue to cover those costs?

He continued, noting the reason for asking these questions:

> And it is not that we are trying to get rich, because we are not, we are a public institution, tax supported . . . in some cases it might very well be that the institution makes an investment of state resources to make a degree happen. More recently new state resources have not been very abundant or available, so the programs have had to make, build a financial case that shows that they are able to sort of stand-alone.

Dr. Smith shared how the revenue forecast is a part of the conversation, with a hope that the program will be in the black:

> Most of what we have been looking at and approving in the past couple of years have been programs that are meant to bring students and fulfill societal need, and generate revenue, at least revenue neutrality and hopefully positive revenue growth.

Dr. Mills indicated similar topics were addressed in preliminary conversations:

> So we need to know how it fits in to the general framework of the existing college programs. Existing programs in the college and also what are the financial

> resources and human resources that are either currently available or planned to be available to sustain the program. So, basically it is an informal discussion before any forms are completed because those forms are really time consuming.

Dr. Easton noted that financial consideration were central to program approvals in South state:

> . . . you cannot get a new program approved in this state and haven't been able to get one approved for the last twenty years unless you could show that you had the money to do it, because we have been operating under the assumption that there will be no new revenue. And it has been a good assumption because we actually have less and less revenue from the state with each passing year. So, the university has to show that the program can be funded.

Financial considerations in the development process are recent developments at some institutions. Dr. Owens discussed changes at North Central State University:

> It used to be at North Central State University, up until about 5 years ago, that the issue of resources was in fact a separate consideration from the issue of a new program. So you could put through a request for a new program and it could be approved but not implemented until the resources were identified . . . Several years ago the provost said, no, we are not doing that anymore, that these things have to go in tandem through the curricular review process.

The development of online programs for financial gains was also mentioned. Dr. Smith shared how revenue might influence the decision to develop an online program:

> . . .there is incentive to create new programs online because of the revenue model by which revenue from students new to the campus who are taking online courses

> become shared with the unit, that doesn't exist on campus. We have got much more innovation in the online realm because the faculty see a way to, for their units to derive a direct benefit from this.

Dr. Young noted that the East Plains University responded to the possibility of revenue from online courses by investing in the development of this format system-wide. This has centralized some course development process across the eight-campus system:

> . . . (the development of online courses are) market driven, so not just developing whatever you like, but really ensuring that the units have to do a market analysis and understand all of it. So, we have, this is just getting under way. They put 8 million, which is at the university level, into the initiative. The campuses will put in more . . . Some of that money has developed a kind of factory, if you would like, in university information technology services, to produce the materials.

Holds on developments. Reductions in state support have resulted in holds on developments. Dr. Jones shared that "currently we are under a sort of program, soft program freeze, due to the study by the Central Plains Department of Higher Education on enrollments and low producing degree programs." Dr. Easton shared a similar halt in program development by the university administration:

> . . . we just had an example of a program change, which both the provost and I rejected because it would have required the hiring of additional faculty, and we have no money right now to hire additional faculty. There was a proposal that came forward for modern languages to create a new bachelors degree in Japanese. We have a minor in Japanese. But it conditioned on the hiring of a tenure track

> faculty member, and we do not have the money to do that. So those, that program, that proposal did not go forward.

Ms. Williams also noted that changes in state funding reduced the number of new program developments and heightened attention to financial considerations at the state level:

> . . . people (were) really churning things out, thinking about what they wanted to do, be forward thinking, be ahead of the game, and then the budget crisis hit the state . . . and we got a little bit of push back from the state, where the state starts, started saying to us stop using stuff like internal reallocation, you know. We know everything is internal reallocation, but how are you going to actually fund these things, so don't use that as the pat answer anymore. But that was really, I mean, almost all of it can be pointed to that, you know, resource structures change, we didn't have the income, dwindling state resources, we had to really think very hard about what we were doing.

Investment in programs. On occasion, an institution will develop a new program in hopes to attract external funding or as an investment in a core academic area. Dr. Smith explained that a Ph.D. program at Central Plains had been developed for just that purpose:

> Another doctoral degree where that same decision was reached was the Clinical and Translational Sciences Ph.D. program. Having a program like that in place was a prerequisite for the University putting in for major funding for clinical and translational sciences with the National Institute of Health. So, to qualify for 20 million dollars in NIH funding, and that is a broad, that is not an accurate number,

> but massive, multi-millions of NIH funding, to, which we hoped to be able to get on a competitive basis, we had to have a Clinical and Translational Sciences Ph.D. program in place. Faculty in . . . the School of Medicine put together a brilliant plan . . . to get the Clinical and Translations Science Ph.D. together, we needed the grant. We've come this close, like extremely close, to getting the grant, but we haven't gotten it. . . . We have not accepted any students because we really do not have a way of funding the programs. . . . So that is another example of where the institutional commitment to offer this degree is placed . . . in the much larger context, institutional mission, of health research and medical research that we haven't yet been able to pursue.

In a similar vein of thought, Dr. Easton related a situation where a program development was based on the possibility of attracting a valuable art collection. The result was a large donation of Native American art to the university. He explained the process with the following:

> . . . the university was competing for a very large art collection, Native American art. One way to attract the donor to give that to the university was to create a new Ph.D. program focusing on Native American art history. . .We have an art history program, but it is not anything focusing on Native American art. And that came about in conversations between the director of the art museum, the president, and the organization that had the collection. It was a bequest. The owner had died and they were looking for a place to put this massive art collection. And so based on those conversations, the art museum director and the president spoke with, worked with the dean of fine arts and the director of the, of the school of art . . .

> And within a very short period of time, they wrote a proposal to create a new Ph.D. program in Native American art, and it was, it went through the system real fast.

Four participants shared that the provost may apply discretionary funding to support a program. Dr. Owens noted that the possibility of this at North Central State University:

> The other thing that the provost here has available to him, and this started a number of years ago, is that recognizing that there is a limited amount of new dollars coming in to the institution each year, there was a need to create flexibility in existing funds, alright, so, . . . every department gives back one percent of their general fund budget. That one percent then is money available, additional money available to the provost to redistribute to, to promote and incentivize new things.

In a similar line of thought, Dr. Andrews shared that the provost may support an endeavor if it serves the mission of the university:

> . . . if this is a fabulous area that is worth supporting, the provost himself, may say, OK, I am going to provide some additional resources for you to hire three faculty members, or whatever new positions have to be hired, associated with the program. So there is a combination, it is not just, well, this doesn't make money so we are not going to do it.

Dr. Neate indicated there were multiple ways the provost could support new endeavors, but that a well-developed plan was necessary:

> . . . but then there is not really any single way that, that you could say that here is how the university will support your proposal effort and have it apply everywhere

> . . . we needed tuition waivers . . . other cases they may need equipment, or space, or people, or commitments of effort. I do think that we are quite responsive to, to developed ideas. I don't think that we are overly responsive to telling people yes, if you write that proposal, I will give you 100,000 dollars.

Dr. Young shared that a provost fund intended for investments in programs at East Plains University had a unique source:

> . . . the provost fund, which is discretionary funding that the provost has . . . you know coming in the first instance at least, from athletics. So, redirecting funds from the athletics department to the academic mission, which is pretty unusual.

University budget models. Participants discussed two types of budget models, responsibility-centered management and historical. Both were described as benefitting new program development. Dr. Smith shared his view on how the budget model influences program development at Central Plains University:

> We don't have responsibility-centered management here, so it is not like every educational program has to generate its own tuition, but in the aggregate we are looking to make sure that this doesn't lose money for the University, or, if it does, it is for a mission critical purpose that lies outside of just providing an academic program.

Dr. Harris indicated that the historical budget model at North University helped reduce duplication of programs and courses and alleviate the need for program review by a university-wide curriculum committee:

> So, we have a historical budget model. You get what you got last year plus whatever increment the entire university got. So in general, especially in the short

> term, having more students or fewer students doesn’t affect your budget. And in a different kind of budget model, where money follows the students even in the short term, there is often an incentive to start offering, everybody to offer statistics, or everybody to offer math, because then you get the enrollments. And in that case you will often see a curriculum, a university-wide curriculum committee trying to stop duplication.

Other participants felt that responsibility-centered management increased the entrepreneurial spirit of the academic units. Dr. Turner indicated this with the following discussion of Full Time Equivalencies (FTE) in the computer science department. Facing a decline in enrollments, the budget model resulted in a move towards collaboration:

> . . . of course the funding for a unit is partially dependent on how many FTEs they are generating in that unit through teaching their courses, and how many majors they have. So, they reached out to other units to develop collaborative degrees. They developed a computational biology degree with Biology. And they developed a computer criminology degree with Criminology. So, it is another whole impetus for that development.

Dr. Mills shared a similar view of the budget at East University. In reference to collaboration between units, he stated:

> But, you see, with our budget model, which gives, which awards dollars partially based on the number of enrollments or student credit hours produced. If colleges usually find that there is a good reason for them to step up to the plate.

Dr. Young agreed; a resource-centered management budget encouraged faculty collaboration:

> I was on the small committee that was charged with reviewing the RCM, we have a five-year review, and we just went through this process last year. And one of the questions we got asked was, is RCM an impediment to program creation and to faculty collaboration across unit lines? And actually . . . we did a lot of research on this and we asked the deans and we asked faculty and we considered their responses, and we came to the conclusion that it isn't at all. It is often held up as an excuse, for being for not collaborating, but actually it, in many ways it provides an incentive.

Dr. Andrews felt that the activity-based budget in place at North Central University encouraged academic units to be forward thinking in terms of resources:

> . . . they are tied to activity and individuals and schools and colleges are encouraged to be entrepreneurial and to identify new revenue sources and where it makes sense and to continue to innovate, and continue to move forward, and we have been extremely fortunate that we have resources. So even in really constrained times, you know, where the state is, is cutting us we have our own resources to be able to continue to move in directions that are really important.

Dr. Thompson suggested a switch to a resource-centered management budget at North State University increased faculty scrutiny of new programs:

> Anyway, when we went to this resource-management model, we basically said, OK the way to fairly ask colleges to plan and to incentivize success is to say, there is a formula by which all the tuition goes to the colleges for all the students . . . So what that budget process has done is it has brought into sharper focus the importance of the faculty review of new programs . . . Because the idea of

> curriculum poaching is there. And it has also brought into sharper focus, not only at the program level, but at the course level, so that for example, if engineering tried to introduce a math course, because if they taught a math course, they would get the tuition. This faculty approval process puts a stop to it. It says, wait a minute that is not your scope. Your scope is this. And so it seems like that what was developed in a different budget time as a, as a curriculum and new program approval process has worked as a moderating influence on the potential abuses of this budget model.

He went on to explain that he felt the colleges benefited from this budget model:

> Actually one of, I think the benefits of this resource management model is that at the college level there is greater capability to understand those issues now. Because as part of this, it, before this, they basically got a block budget that would change incrementally from year-to- year. Now what they need to do is take in enrollment estimates and figure out what does that mean for our costs and our revenue.

Dr. Laurie noted that there was little economic benefit for units to take on additional responsibilities, and as such, the modified resource-centered budget model was being reviewed at East State University:

> . . .we don't fund departments based upon the number of majors. We look at student credit hour delivery but the model is not, it is not a one-to-one. So . . . there is really no incentive for me to take on that economic responsibility, because I don't know that I am going to get, know that I am going to get something for it . . . So we are looking at different kinds of funding models now. We have hired a

> new director of budget and he’s looking at all kinds of budgeting models to see if there is some way to make it more transparent, the revenue stream, how it gets from central administration out to, out to units.

Dr. Easton also forecasted changes in program development due to finances and low enrollment at South University:

> The day will come when the president and central administration are going to start looking around for things to cut. And the first place you go is programs that have low enrollment, and then the question is, well it may be vital to the best interest of the university, but it is not pulling its weight. And so then, that’s when it becomes political. Do we really want to maintain this low enrollment program? Is it essential?

Recommendations from the Participants

Participants shared several recommendations for program development. A common theme was pilot methods for new programs. Another was process improvements for their university.

Pilot methods. Nine interviewees discussed pilot methods for new programs. These methods include developing the program as a specialization, track, emphasis area, minor, or major before attempting a new degree. Dr. Jones cited three reasons for taking this approach:

> One of the reasons we do emphasis areas . . . it is not a big enough program to stand alone, we can add it with an existing academic unit . . . which allows to take better advantage of existing capacity in the unit, right. Two, we can get it on the books without having to go all the way through the board . . . and the

> Coordinating Board, three we have proof of concept, so if we do have this explosion of enrollment we may decide, OK, this warrants us having a degree program . . .

Dr. Turner indicated that this topic was one of the first she addressed when approached about a possible new degree program:

> One of my first discussions with a group that comes to me about a new degree is to explore the notion of whether they really need a new degree, or whether this should or could be developed as a major . . . if you don't need a degree, if it is not important to distinguish it from what is already going in the department, then it just makes logical sense not to do it. But I think there is a lot more buy in to that philosophy to, at least examining that question. Sometimes the answer is no, it absolutely needs to be its own degree.

Dr. Thompson also indicated that many new programs are started as a specialization or minor at North State University. He explained this thought process with the following:

> You know, it sort of, there is definitely this more specialized interest, or sub-discipline interest, we are not sure if that interest is sufficient to make it a viable degree program or major, so let's start out with a minor or a specialization or something else and see how popular it is.

Dr. Mills shared that this approach allowed the program to develop, resulting in evidence for program demand, faculty expertise, and student interest. He stated:

> Usually they are programs that are offered as minors, or some form before. Except for biomedical engineering, which was obvious that we needed to do that.

> But all the others grew out, it is a gradual process. Hey, OK, so we have this minor that is doing really well . . . there are a lot of requests, there are a lot of students taking the minor, so let's move it up to a major. And there you also have the evidence of faculty expertise that you currently have.

In a similar statement, Dr. Harris described this incremental approach at North University:

> Often times on this campus, a department will start with a certificate or minor. So a certificate in aging studies, and then if it feels as if demand is high enough and there are actually things that students can do with that degree, that then moves to making it a degree program. So, often there are kind of baby steps that lead to a new degree.

Dr. Owens noted that the establishment of minors at North Central State University is a recent development. These allow students to span across several disciplines in their studies. He explained how with the following:

> Many institutions have a long history of having minors so that students can get a major in one area and a minor is some other area, North Central State doesn't. We have minors now, but they are a more recent kind of invention, if you will, and many of them have started coming on the books so that students can get that more mulit or trans-disciplinary education by taking a minor here, or major here and a minor over here.

Ms. Williams suggested that student enrollments in existing minors and majors are used by departments to justify new programs:

> Folks do tend to . . . say things like ‘we already have a standing undergraduate minor, and that minor has 50 students enrolled, therefore we believe that there are X number of those students who might be interested in pursuing this as a major,’ so there is that kind of loose discussion about that within that.

She also shared a specific example of a discipline that started as a credential and was developed into a Ph.D. program:

> . . . the Ph.D. in African American studies, and that one has quite literally been . . . a real obvious progression. So they started, you know, 20 years ago with this particular credential, they moved into bachelors level credential, they then had an opportunity to become a full-fledged department, then they offered masters level, now they are looking towards the Ph.D., so you can really see the trajectory.

Development of a program as minor or major may ease the path to approval. Dr. Turner stated as much by sharing “if it could be a major, and not a degree, if it is appropriate to be a major, then you don’t have that level of scrutiny (state approval).” Dr. Easton also noted that tracks were easier to approve, “Yeah, they are easy. New degree programs get the highest degree of scrutiny. Tracks within the degree programs rarely raise much tension at all.” Dr. Young echoed these ideas as well:

> . . . increasingly we are being advised to stay away from creating new majors, but wherever possible to work within the framework of existing majors in developing new tracks, because tracks don’t require commission approval.

Dr. Harris shared concerns with creating tracks, primarily that there was a lack of policies on how to close and monitor tracks within the system:

> I don't think I would, I think the only thing I would have a conversation about is, we have a lot of departments that have started creating tracks . . . and we have rules about how you shut degrees down, but you don't have rules about how you shut down tracks. And so the formation of tracks seems to me not very clearly defined on this campus . . . I think what we probably should do . . . is actually sit down and talk about what we mean by a track. Because everything else there are rules and processes and things written down. Tracks just kind of started happening

Process improvements. The process improvements recommended by participants can be grouped into four categories: simplification of forms, definition of terms and roles, closing degrees, and software solutions. Each interviewee touched upon one of these ideas when discussing improvement possibilities.

***Simplification of forms*.** Dr. Turner and Dr. Mills both showed a desire to simplify the forms required by East state. Dr. Turner shared that she would like to change "the proposal format, I would love to get my hands on that and be in charge of that." Dr. Mills echoed these ideas, stating "that the state forms could be simplified. It can be a lot of information, and sometimes hard to complete."

Definition of terms. Dr. Jones shared that discussion of terminology for a new program is sometimes difficult at Central Plains University. He explained this with the following:

> . . . we can run into some, some interesting discussions and debates about if this should be called this or this be called that, or should it be organized like this or should it be organized like that. So that, I wish we had a better system for

> navigating those kinds of things. I can't, I can't say whether we are better at it or worse at than any, than anybody else.

Dr. Turner also shared that terminology can create problems for program development. She provided the following example:

> . . . and really the degree name does not match at all what they are doing. Like for example we used to have really an athletic training, it was a major in the P.E. degree. So the degree would be P.E., this is about the worst example we ever had, we had this for years and years. So somebody really essentially does an athletic training degree but their actual diploma says physical education.

Definition of roles. *Dr*. Smith shared that the definition of roles and responsibilities were problematic. He expressed this through the idea of scalability:

> I think it works very well on the small scale. I think for large-scale efforts, we haven't figured out exactly how to marry the institutional interests with the groups of faculty. It has worked on a couple of occasions, but, as I said, if the Graduate Dean tries to run the show, it is going to be a failure. On the other hand, sometimes there isn't somebody to run the show and we still expect a faculty member, with no additional compensation, to take on the lion's share of putting together innovative curricula.

Dr. Smith also noted that changes to curriculum approaches would also benefit the process:

> I wish there were a better mechanism, less a new degree proposal than a curricula reinvention at the program level, and that really in some ways would be a more important process than new degrees. We've got hundreds of degrees, maybe we

> don't need more degrees, maybe we need more innovation in curriculum, which takes a different kind of effort and we are not really geared up for that effort, but it is very closely related.

Dr. Owens also noted that defining roles could help ease program development, specifically how discussions progressed through the university. He shared this with the following:

> . . . you will get this wonderful academic conversation going on around that, which is wonderful, and we have had all of those academic conversations in our smaller group, but know we need to find ways to help the people who are going to roll this out, this isn't all about re-having that academic conversation, it is more about here is where we have come to consensus.

Dr. Laurie indicated a similar concern about the role of the faculty at West State University, but focused the discussion on transparency and shared governance. She explained that:

> So I think we tried as hard, but we need to try harder on being transparent, finding new ways to engage faculty, cause what our shared governance task force report said was, faculty should be involved, more importantly, they have to be involved. They have to be expected to be involved. This should be part of what it means to be a professor in this community, this, that you are expected to be involved in the decisions. So that shared governance only works when it is a joint decision.

She went on to pinpoint the break in communication:

> I think that there is a pretty good level of discussion with the provost, the provost cabinet, the council, the deans. I think that there is pretty good discussions

> between the faculty and their department chairs. I think that the department chairs and the dean, from my prospective, are the weak link.

Dr. Easton shared that blurred roles can weigh on the process in a negative fashion. He cited presidential involvement in the academic process as a possible concern, stating that problems occur when:

> When you have a disconnect between the faculty who are responsible for the integrity of a program, and you have some powerful force over here driving things of questionable integrity.

The involvements of numerous committees at the faculty senate level were noted by Dr. Thompson as a concern. Decisions that had already been made are often debated by multiple committees. He stated that :

> . . . the part that I think is more cumbersome than it needs to be is at our faculty senate, and this is true not just of curriculum things, but we have the faculty senate curriculum committee, we have a faculty senate academic affairs consul, and we have a faculty senate executive board, and sometimes the academic affairs consul and the executive board have substantive discussions of things that the curriculum committee has already gone over.

He offered the following solution:

> You could say that the faculty senate curriculum reports directly to the executive board, and the executive board simply dockets whatever items come to it from the curriculum committee. I am not sure that would give you different results, but it would streamline things a bit. I mean it would save, could typically save a month in the process. Even for programs where there isn't controversy.

Closing degrees. A couple of participants discussed the need to better define the process for closing a program, not initiating one. Dr. Andrews shared her thoughts in the following manner:

> I would, I would say if there was one thing, I would change about the whole process, is at the other end where we almost never close any academic programs. They may become moribund because there's no students that are interested anymore, but we don't actually take that final step to say, we're just removing it from the books.

Dr. Harris' remarks on this subject were discussed previously.

Software solutions. Participants noted that software solutions for tracking the program approval process could ease the administrative burden. Dr. Mills shared his thoughts on this by stating: "You don't know where things are at. So we are actually working on that system right now to make it more user friendly." Dr. Andrews also spoke to this. She stated:

> . . . that is certainly an area where we are looking at software, a software solution Some of the schools and colleges may have their own, but there is no university-wide solution at this point.

Dr. Neate was also making similar efforts at West University. He shared that:

> I have been working to try to create an electronic workflow process or new program review approval. And in the end it will be awesome. But, but in the interim it has been interesting and has let me map out exactly what the process looks like.

In the course of mapping out this process, Dr. Neate also identified points that a program would stall with the following:

> And I have also identified places where I call them eddies. You know what, what happens in a river, where a proposal could drown, in particular you could say . . . if it involved new course proposals as part of the bigger package that would go to the undergraduate curriculum committee, which would have problems with things and that became an eddy . . . If the graduate council doesn't need input from the undergraduate council, they shouldn't have to wait for those people to act. And the other is to make sure that there is some sort of monitoring process so that it doesn't sit on somebody's desk for three months.

Ms. Williams shared how she believed a recently purchased tracking system would benefit the process at Middle Plains University:

> What I think it might facilitate though, is some of the back and forth dialog between meetings. So, you know, they sit down and they have a conversation and these red flags are raised, they want to ask this additional set of questions, you know, that set of questions can be shot back to the proposer, you know, lickity split, hopeful the proposer is sitting on them, ready to respond back, those are all ready to go, so when the next conversation is in the pipeline, you know, there is something to reflect on. The email back and forth gets frustrating and challenging . . . So if everybody is in the same system, knows what to be looking for and then there is the potential to kind of expedite that conversation between all the points in the process.

Dr. Young expressed similar hopes for software being developed at East Plains University:

> The introduction of an automated process for course approval, remonstrance, and maintenance, makes a huge difference because we know exactly where the course is, we are able to draw on the description to create electronic bulletins. I mean it . . . it has been a huge improvement in work flow.

CHAPTER 6

Discussions and Future Research

The following chapter contains discussions of the primary themes that emerged in the interviews. Possibilities for future research are also included.

Internal Communications

Initial conversations on degree development take place in a number of clusters. Participants indicated that deans, provosts, and other central administrators are sharing ideas about new programs before development begins. These exchanges are informal; no official program proposal has been submitted. This vetting process seems to be an important aspect of building a consensus and is aimed at two general questions: Is the program a viable option, and how does it fit within the context of the university as a whole?

The timing, topics addressed, and tenor of these conversations are reported in Miller (2013):

> The importance of early communication was highlighted by all participants. No one wants surprises when it comes to new program proposals. However, while open conversations were deemed necessary, they were not always part of the formal, documented process. Early buy-in from central administration was suggested as a positive step in program development, and early conversations

> support that effort. Ultimately, provost consent is necessary. The faculty can pursue approval, but without the provost's signature the program may languish.
>
> A ubiquitous topic for these early conversations was not cited by the participants; preliminary discussions serve multiple purposes. Institutional fit, duplication, and sustainability were noted as areas addressed in these early meetings; feedback on the proposal was also provided. The areas discussed mirrored institutional goals at the time of the proposal. In this sense, central administration serves to amplify overarching messages or concerns by framing questions during initial conversations. Central administration is not creating curriculum; rather, it is encouraging the faculty to understand limitations and embrace broad institutional visions.
>
> The tenor of these early discussions seemed positive. Participants viewed their role as that of a facilitator, offering advice on partnerships and asking constructive questions about the proposed degree. They might recommend a different avenue for development, such as developing the program as a track within an existing major or establishing it first as a minor, but the decision to pursue the development is in the hands of the faculty. They also noted that they were able to assist faculty members in navigating the process, as it was often the first time the developer had proposed a new program. (p. 58)

External Influences

Business and advisory groups. There were a range of external influences discussed by the participants. The relationship between business entities and program development was university specific. Participants from Central Plains University and South University were able to identify specific program requests from external groups. Other participants did not make this observation. As such, these types of contacts with central administration do not seem to be normal operating procedures.

Two factors may increase communications between business entities and institutions: the need for multidisciplinary programs and federal reporting requirements. Multidisciplinary partnerships may result from the need to align programs with employer needs. For example, the development of professional science degrees can be viewed as a response to gaps in industry staffing. Companies with research divisions require employees with managerial skills and an understanding of the science used in product development. This was recognized by postsecondary institutions, and faculty developed programs that encompass these knowledge bases. If these intersections become more common, additional programs may be needed to provide students with the range of experience needed to operate in these multidisciplinary environments.

Possible changes to federal reporting may also increase communications between employers and academia. A March 2013 court ruling denied the DOE request to require Gainful Employment reports for graduates from institutions. However, the DOE has renewed efforts at establishing these requirements; in April of 2013, the DOE announced they were gathering feedback on best measures for Gainful Employment (Field, 2013). If Gainful Employment reports are re-instated, they may have significant implications on receiving federal funds. As a result, institutions may increase communication with industry and business groups to aid in job placement. One result of this may be increased collaboration on program outcomes.

Other postsecondary institutions. To borrow Dr. Mills' phrase, observing trends at other institutions will likely continue to be "academic fashion." One aspect of these observations will be the development of emerging disciplines and new fields of study. Another will be the continued transformation of educational delivery. Online education provides a good example. Thirteen years ago few institutions offered online programs. In 2013, online courses are an expected part of the educational landscape. The development and approval of online programs presented new administrative challenges. Many institutions are still coming to terms with how to build these programs. Oversight, design, quality control, involvement of outside vendors, and scope are oft cited concerns of faculty and administration. Program approval processes will likely change in response to these types of questions.

Ms. Williams noted the importance of offering a unique approach to programs offered at other universities. As online programs minimize access (distance) barriers, schools will need to take this into consideration for both new and existing programs. If a student can attain a business degree from a number of institutions, why should they attend 'your' university? Universities will need to shape this identity during the program development stage, allowing the unique perspective to emerge through all levels of the program.

Although there will be continued development of online delivery, other trends will gain popularity and weigh on the approval process. One such trend is competency-based education (CBE). CBE will likely grow in popularity following the DOE Dear Colleague letter in March of 2013 (Bergeron, 2013). In this memo, Acting Assistant Secretary of Postsecondary Education, David A. Bergeron, confirmed that federal funding can be applied to CBE programs. There are a number of schools that already offer these types of programs, including RU/VH institutions such as University of Washington, University of Wisconsin, and Michigan State University (Wukman, 2012). There will likely be an increase in the development of competency-based degrees now that federal aid can be distributed to students in these programs. Development of new programs based on CBE practices will present new challenges, similar to the challenges of developing online programs. The result will likely be changes to institutional program review and approval.

Education councils will also continue to be important sources of ideas for new programs. These consortiums speak to the collegial nature of higher education, one that involves communication and consult with likeminded individuals. For example, several participants mentioned the Council of Graduate Schools. One service offered by this group is benchmarking. Recommendations and observations based on the data provided by this group and others that are similar in nature will continue to help guide program decisions.

Dr. Mills discussed a multi-institutional degree program that was in development between two RU/VH institutions. This would not be the first program to offer courses from multiple institutions. For example, The Central Plains IDEA involves an agricultural partnership program with 19 member institutions and a human services partnership program with 13 universities (Great Plains IDEA). These types of partnerships may increase in popularity as online courses become more prevalent. It does seem to run contrary to Ms. Williams comment on offering a ‘unique program.’ But this method does allow for multiple perspectives and a larger base of faculty to be integrated into a single program.

State boards and accrediting bodies. Participants related the desire of state administration to avoid program duplication across the state. It is interesting that there were variations on how this is accomplished. In some states, it is up to the university proposing the new program to reach out to the other institutions. In other states, this function was taken on by the state-level administrators. As variations in states are often based on legislative and state regulations, these requirements will likely continue to vary from state-to-state.

Two anomalies in state oversight mentioned by participants provide additional avenues of discussion. The first is the lack of a state-level higher education administration structure in North Central state. This did not seem to be a cause of concern with either North Central University or North Central State University. It can be understood that this increases the autonomy of the institutions. However, it seems that the coordination of 15 public universities would require some administrative support. The participants did not see this as a concern. In contrast, the period when there was no coordinating higher education board in East state resulted in rapid, unchecked program developments across the state. Dr. Turner noted that the period of de-regulation resulted in ‘people going a little crazy.’ The dichotomy of these situations may warrant further exploration on the culture of state oversight.

Due to DOE regulations, understanding variations in state-level approvals has become increasingly important for universities operating distance education programs. Navigating approval requirements in 50 states has increased administrative functions and costs. The examples provided by the participants highlight some of the differences in state approval processes. There are attempts to create reciprocity agreements to ease this burden. The National Center for Interstate Compacts has recognized the need to address this issue. The organization explains this problem with the following:

> Fifty individual states, and the institutions that seek approval to offer courses within them, now engage in duplicative, costly, time-consuming and inconsistently applied regulatory exercises. Moreover, some states exercise minimum qualitative control, reducing the ability of states to accept approvals on an interstate basis. Reform is needed in the policies and processes of state regulatory review and approval for postsecondary educational institutions, and especially for those colleges and universities with national footprints that offer degrees across multiple political boundaries (National Center for Interstate compacts).

It will be interesting to see if these efforts, or similar efforts by other groups, result in changes to state-level approvals. One barrier that reciprocity agreements face is changing state requirements. Dr. Laurie and Dr. Easton commented on the confusion caused by the formation of new committees and a change of focus in the state-level approval process. Approval requirements will continue to evolve, even as universities and compacts attempt to codify the requirements in each state. This may prevent any sweeping cross-state agreements.

Accreditation from external boards will continue to be an important factor of degree development. The example most often offered by the participants is the need for engineering programs to attain external approval. State requirements will also weigh on the importance of these approvals. For example, to sit for the Certified Public Accountant test in Texas, a prospective CPA must have graduated from a school with specialized business accreditation such as Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business-International or the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (Maphis, 2013). This type of requirement applies not only to universities in Texas, but also institutions that may have business graduates in the state of Texas who want to sit for the CPA exam in Texas. Therefore, specialized accreditation is central for a prospective accounting student in Texas, and this may sway application and enrollment decisions.

Market demand for enrollments was also mentioned by the participants in the context of state approvals. This will likely continue to be a focus in many states. Public universities are still dealing with funding cuts enacted following the 2008 recession. Proving that a program is viable in terms of enrollments helps avoid concerns about financing. Accurate enrollment forecasts may require increased sophistication in metrics. Benchmarking with other institutions may help this process. Also, as data mining becomes more prevalent, administrators may be able to better forecast possible student interest in a new program.

Multidisciplinary Partnerships

Discussion on multidisciplinary partnerships was reported in Miller (2013):

> Opinions expressed about the difficulties of establishing multidisciplinary degrees paralleled previous reports on the creation of these types of programs (Abbot 2001; Manathunga, Lant, and Mellick 2006; McFadden et al. 2011; Newswander and Borrego 2009; Reed, Cooper, and Young 2007; Schlegel 2011; Stone,

Bollard, and Harbor 2009). A primary concern raised by the participants was that current academic structures dissuade multidisciplinary collaborations. There was not a general consensus on how to address this problem; however, the interviewees indicated that it was not a significant concern at the graduate level. They noted that the presence of a standing central administrative unit housing graduate students participating in multiple academic areas eased the creation of multidisciplinary graduate programs. A possible solution at the undergraduate level would be to establish a central administrative college or school with similar responsibilities. This would conflict with tradition and push against current administrative structures. However, if the establishment of multidisciplinary programs is crucial, then it may be worthwhile to further investigate this possibility. Also, an increased focus on the development of multidisciplinary degrees may encourage simplification of the process, allowing for easier paths to completion.

Schlegel (2011) suggests (sic) that relying on the goodwill of faculty and academic units to establish multidisciplinary programs is not a sustainable model. However, the participants were hesitant to take on additional responsibilities for new program development. Their overarching hope is that collaboration is recognized as a crucial element of academia and developers will seek out opportunities to engage in multidisciplinary program development. In some cases, faculty may span boundaries, which has been identified as an important factor in linking local and external information sources (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). Unfortunately, there is not always an awareness of current developments

> among academic units at large institutions. Therefore, the communication of ideas to central administration early in the process is important in allowing partnership recommendations to be made. In this role, central administration acts as a hub and, as Dr. Neate described, allows for the establishment of cross-university connections. (pp. 58-59)

Top down initiatives. Discussion on top down initiatives was reported in Miller (2013):

> The top-down initiatives discussed by the participants had different catalysts. Efforts at Middle Plains University and West State University were based on one-time requests; the first was driven by a desire to encourage multidisciplinary degrees and the second by possible budget cuts. The ongoing Central Plains program was designed with a long horizon, intended to foster ongoing academic collaborations and supported by symposiums and research projects. These initiatives had different outcomes. The Middle Plains request did not result in any new multidisciplinary programs. The one-time charge had limited support, and while central themes for collaboration were identified, there was no forum established to exchange ideas. The West State model was driven by self-preservation. Combinations would either be dictated by budget cuts or agreed upon by the units in advance. As in most cases, the colleges and departments wished to create their own future. This did result in multidisciplinary program developments, but basing collaborations on the fear of budget reductions is probably not a sustainable model either. In contrast, the Central Plains initiative promotes continued multidisciplinary activities, allowing for the formation of

> ideas and providing a venue for these ideas to grow. Central Plains Edge has resulted in new certificates and programs across the university. While additional longitudinal studies are needed to explore this further, this example shows that providing a standing forum for collaboration around central themes can serve as a catalyst for the development of multidisciplinary programs. (p. 59)

Financial Considerations

Enrollment forecasts, which relate directly to financial considerations, will continue to be an important aspect of program approvals. At North Central State University, this is evident in the fact that these requirements were added to the program approval process within the last five years. Also, quantitative summaries of program success often drive decisions to close programs. As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, state legislative branches have used enrollment and graduation data to enforce program reductions at state institutions. Proving the value of a program through enrollment numbers parries these types of attacks. As institutions are required to provide data on enrollment projections, benchmarking and accurate forecasts will be increasingly important. Benchmarking with other institutions may aid in establishing realistic expectations for new program enrollments. Enrollments of similar programs at sister institutions may be a reasonable source for enrollment forecasts. This will require institutions to make concerted efforts to discover best practices in these areas.

Budget concerns may result in barriers to the creation of tenure lines at some institutions, causing development holds for programs that require additional faculty. Ms. Williams noted that these pressures have resulted in changes to the terminology used to propose a new program at Middle Plains University. No longer is ‘internal reallocation of resources’ accepted justification. State administrators now require detailed accounts of revenue sources. Again, the need for specific funding sources will prompt the need for increased benchmarking and data mining. The resistance to providing new faculty and tenure lines is not evident at all institutions, however. For example, in early 2013, the University of Nebraska – Lincoln announced 36 new tenure and tenure-track faculty positions would be created in Agriculture by 2014 (Daily Nebraskan, 2013). These positions are a concerted effort to enhance Agricultural research. The university has designated this as a central mission, and is supporting efforts with these tenure and tenure-track positions.

The appeal of revenue from online enrollments was discussed by only two participants. This is low, considering that a current, common approach to increasing funding streams in higher education is the expansion of online programs. A primary benefit of these programs to universities is that they reach a larger market, allowing for increased enrollments. A barrier to implementing these programs is increased regulations from other states. As discussed in the rationale for conducting this study in Chapter 1 and previously discussed in this chapter, understanding the approval processes in multiple states is an important factor of establishing an online program. Universities will need to consider the administrative requirements when establishing robust online programs intended for interstate delivery. This may include fees for approvals and staff to monitor changes in state approval processes and to keep the university in compliance with regulations in the states where they operate.

Dr. Smith discussed one program development as a method for attracting external grant funding. In his description, the grant depended on the creation of the degree, and the implementation of the degree depended on receiving the grant. This seems like a precarious position for a new program. Dr. Smith placed this example in the larger context of an institutional focus on medical research. In this light, the commitment required to complete the degree program and shepherd it through the approval process seems like a reasonable risk. However, the possibility exists that the funding will not be received, and the program will lie stagnant. This makes it difficult to attract students to a Ph.D. program, and will likely weigh on the program start-up if the funding is received. An example provided by Dr. Easton shows evidence of a positive outcome in a similar situation, however. The university received a large bequest based on the development of a new art Ph.D. Although this approach was not commonplace among the participants, it does provide an interesting topic for consideration: faculty were willing to develop a new program based on the possibility of external funding. Although the new degrees aligned with the mission of the university in the cases presented by Dr. Smith and Dr. Easton, the impetus for action was external funding, not internal, academic-driven purpose.

Four participants discussed the application of provost controlled funds for new program developments. The availability and source of these funds varies from institution to institution. For example, Dr. Andrews stated that the provost at North Central University is also the Chief Budgeting Officer, which provides a certain control over the allocation of funds. Dr. Young shared a unique source for provost funds, the athletic department. This is a unique approach, and would seem to confirm a common assumption that athletic departments are income generators. This is not an accurate assumption, however. Desrochers (2013) completed a study on the financial benefits of a university athletic program, concluding that:

> Although some big-time college sports athletic departments are self-supporting—and some specific sports may be profitable enough to help support other campus sports programs—more often than not, the colleges and universities are subsidizing athletics, not the other way around. In fact, student fees or institutional subsidies (coming from tuition, state appropriations, endowments, or other revenue- generating activities on campus) often support even the largest NCAA Division I college sports programs.

This being the case, the athletic department contributing funds to the provost will likely not be commonplace.

Of the 13 participants, only one, Dr. Laurie, indicated the current university budget model was a barrier to program development. Dr. Laurie also stated it was under review, and would likely change because it was difficult to trace funding through the departments. Seven other participants mentioned budget models, 2 operated with a historical budget and 5 with a resource-centered management (RCM) budget model. These participants felt that both models provided advantages for program development. The historical model was touted for reducing concerns of duplication. In this budget model, departments do not have economic incentives for providing courses already available on campus. Student head counts do not tie directly back to funding, so if a math course is needed, students are encouraged to take it from the math department. Dr. Harris suggested that this removed the need for a central curriculum committee; colleges had fewer concerns with offerings across campus similar to their own. Dr. Smith stated that by using a historical model, every program on campus did not have to generate positive tuition revenue, making it easier to justify ‘mission critical’ programs with low enrollments. Dr. Easton suggested this may not always hold true, however. When cuts are needed, even without a RCM budget to back the numbers, low enrollments will become central to the discussion.

RCM budgets were lauded for increasing collaboration among faculty and encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit. The need to share resources, take part in joint ventures, or seek out partnerships across the university in order to meet student counts and program funding is a powerful incentive. If the focus on multidisciplinary programs gains momentum, as suggested by participants, a RCM could encourage continued collaborations. The barriers to developing multidisciplinary programs previously discussed would still be in place, however. Inter-dependency for funding streams based on these collaborations could be the impetus for future problems. Changes in departmental or college goals, ideologies brought about by new directions in a discipline, or the departure of participating faculty may impact the vitality, and thus the shared funding, of a multidisciplinary program. This could in turn weigh on the funding received from or contributed to a shared tuition stream, shifting the financial burden between the participating units.

Dr. Thompson suggested that a RCM budget required faculty to think about the tuition flow in the university. This is an interesting connection. As the ‘business’ of higher education grows in the national postsecondary dialog, increasing knowledge about these matters across the professorship may facilitate communication between faculty and administration. Awareness of funding issues across the campus could serve as a catalyst for healthy discussions on institutional, college, and departmental goals. Also, as reporting metrics change due to national, state and institutional requirements, this awareness may aid in developing a common language and understanding of the required data, and how it impacts each unit of the institution.

Recommendations from the Participants

Participants offered a number of recommendations for streamlining the program approval process at their university. Although these were institution specific, similar barriers likely exist at other universities. Using pilot methods was mentioned most often. Developing emphasis areas, tracks, majors, and minors were recognized as methods for providing evidence of student interest and proof of program viability. These avenues of development may be increasingly important if budget concerns continue and detailed data is needed for institutional or state documentation for a new program. Pilot programs provide numbers on actual student interest, not projections. If required to provide 'proof' that a program will succeed, these data can be presented as evidence.

The flexibility to create tracks within a degree, although attractive in terms of avoiding the approval process and collecting data for program development, is not entirely free of administrative pitfalls. In some cases, pilot methods allow developers the opportunity to avoid approval processes. Most approval requirements are for new programs, not minors, majors, tracks or certificates. This is likely appealing to faculty on many levels. There may be a couple of issues with this approach, however. One is transcripts. If a course of study is not on a students' transcript, it is a disservice to the student. Dr. Turner described this type of situation. An athletic training degree had been offered as a track within physical education. Even though students graduated with the athletic training coursework, it was difficult to explain to possible employers why their major was in physical education. Tracks and majors should be properly notated in student records to avoid this type of concern.

The issue of unchecked track development raised by Dr. Harris is an interesting consideration as well. Dr. Harris noted that there was not a plan in place to monitor tracks at North University. Her concern was that university policies on closing degrees could be applied to the tracks as well. At North University, a student can return at any point and complete a degree they started, even if the degree has been retired. At the time of the interview, there was no guidance on how this policy weighed on tracks. Should students be able to return at any point and complete a track within a major as well? This could cause administrative difficulties as track development and discontinuation are unchecked processes in the example provided by Dr. Harris.

Participants also noted that the development process was hindered by ill-defined terms and assignment of responsibilities. Codifying terms within the university would assist in facilitating discussions between units. Variations in terminology due to academic practice and college history may not allow this to take place, however. For the assignment of responsibilities, an undertone of some interviews was that the continual conversations by numerous committees on the same aspect of a new program can stall an approval. Dr. Thompson noted that decisions that had been made were often debated by multiple committees who had no oversight of the process. This redundancy does not result in changes, only added time to the process. Mapping the approval process, investigating the value-added at each point, and culling redundant steps would result in fewer delays.

Software solutions were mentioned by 5 participants. The purposes of the software discussed are tracking and easing communication. A program designed to aid tracking and communication could be helpful to central administration. One setback would be participation from all constituents. Many times new software is seen as ‘one more thing’ for those that may only use it on occasion. Overcoming this barrier would be a challenge. Institutions may want to explore applications of existing software such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), Student Information Systems (SIS), or Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software, to answer the need for program development software. Most universities have licenses for these types of programs. It may be that one could be used to help facilitate the approval process. For example, a course set-up in the LMS to allow for discussion of a proposal and distribution of documentation, or a communication track set-up in a CRM to distribute emails based on workflow benchmarks could relieve some administrative barriers.

Future Research

The primary themes that surfaced in this research provide topics for future studies. Internal communication, external influences multidisciplinary partnerships, financial considerations, and recommendations from the participants all outline paths of inquiry. Future studies can focus on these elements of program development at postsecondary institutions.

There were several internal communication factors discussed by the participants: institutional fit, duplication, and sustainability. It would be interesting to know how these concerns play out following the implementation of a new program. Are programs that receive pushback on any of these three factors hampered over the long term? Does a program that is instated even though these concerns are raised succeed at a different rate than those that do not? These questions require longitudinal studies. Identifying several programs in development and tracking them through the entire process would provide insight for future developments and data on how these concerns weigh on the development and implementation of a program.

External influences will continue to apply pressures on the development of new programs. It will be important to track how these forces change over time. Academic fashion and the need of employers will likely influence these interactions. Monitoring of the connection between institutions and industry will aid in understanding how these connections develop. There are likely additional examples of successful partnerships of this nature. Research aimed at discovering these examples would be of benefit to postsecondary administrators.

The participants discussed several aspects of multidisciplinary developments, including top down initiatives. Several interviewees noted that multidisciplinary programs are the direction higher education is heading. Discussing the difficulties in creating these programs, finding examples of successful developments, and further discovery of some of the top down initiatives will add to the body of research on this topic. For central administration, details on the later may be of value. Examples of initiatives that served as catalysts for successful multidisciplinary programs would be of particular interest to those who can take similar actions.

Studies on financial models and program funding would also be a valuable addition to the body of research. Both historical and RCM models were touted as being beneficial to program development. A deeper understanding of this dichotomy may aid in budgeting decisions. In addition, general funding for new programs was a concern. Finding innovative approaches to solving this barrier would be an excellent resource.

Pilot methods and software solutions were discussed by a number of participants. Gathering additional information on both of these factors would help round out the current body of literature. Best practices based on examples from multiple institutions would help in making decisions to refine procedures at postsecondary schools. Examples of software solutions and applications would be of particular interest to administrators tasked with tracking the program approval process at their institution.

This research was limited by the parameters of the collective case study and the number of participants. Information on the approval process at other types of institutions may provide examples of the factors discussed above not found within the participant pool. In addition, this research focused on discussions with central administrators. A better understanding of these processes at the college and faculty level would be of value. Although there are likely many similar concerns and barriers at each step of the process, the input of the faculty and college administrators would develop in a broader understanding of program development. Additional studies framed in the same manner but focused on interviews with these groups would serve as quality companion studies to the current report.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to describe the approval process for new programs at Research Universities/Very High, with a focus on the administrative process after curriculum development is complete at the departmental or college level. The central question for this research was: How do academic officers describe the administrative approval process for new programs? Thirteen participants from 12 institutions participated in interviews on this topic. Five primary themes emerged in their responses: Internal Communications, External Influences, Multidisciplinary Partnerships, Financial Considerations, and Recommendations from the Participants. The discussion of these themes by the participants is useful for discovery of the program approval process at the interview sites. Although the research is limited by the parameters of the case selection and the number of participants, the data contribute to the body of literature on postsecondary administration. In addition, this study identifies several areas of program approval processes that may warrant further research.

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Appendix A

Invitation to Participate in the Study

Dear _______,

My name is Nathan Miller and I am a doctoral student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I am currently conducting interviews for my dissertation and you have been identified as having experience that will allow you to provide valuable insight into my research topic.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the various systems used by universities and colleges to develop new programs. The focus is on the administrative aspect of the process, not curriculum development. The significance of this is to better understand how institutions respond to changing demands for specializations and programs.

If possible, I would like to schedule a time to interview you in person about your experiences with and knowledge on this topic. Please let me know if you are willing to participate, and if so, when might be a good time frame to schedule a meeting.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Nathan Miller
nbmiller@huskers.unl.edu
(573) 424-0797

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Title of Project
Institutional Governance of New Program Development

Purpose of Research
This research project will investigate the various systems used by universities and colleges to develop new programs. Information gathered will be used for a doctoral dissertation and may be presented in journal articles and presentations at professional meetings. You are invited to participate in this research because of your knowledge about the new degree process at your institution.

Procedures
Participation in this study will consist of a 75-minute interview in a location of your choosing. The interview will be taped with your permission and transcribed by the primary investigator. The transcript will then be sent to you for review. At that time, you may clarify your responses or give the researcher additional information. The interview questions will focus on the processes used in your current institution for new degree approval.

Risk and/or Discomforts
There are no known risks involved in participation in the study.

Benefits
Through your participation in this study, you may gain new insights to personal and professional experiences that are meaningful. You will also be part of a meaningful contribution to an area of educational research where a gap exists in the literature.

Confidentiality
Any information obtained during this study that could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office. The investigator will only see the data during the study. The information obtained in this study will be used for a doctoral dissertation and may be published in scientific journals and/or presented at scientific meetings, but the data will be reported as aggregated data. The audio recordings will be erased after three years.

Compensation
None.

Opportunity to Ask a Question
You may ask a question concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. You may call the investigator at any time, (573) 424-0797, or the investigator's advisor, Dr. Marilyn Grady, office phone (402) 472-0974. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject that

have not been answered by the investigator or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska – Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965.

Freedom to Withdraw
You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or the University of Nebraska. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent; Right to Receive a Copy
You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent for to keep.

______ Check if you agree to be audio recorded during the interview.

____

Signature of Research Participant Date

Name and Contact Information of the Investigators
Nathan Miller, M.M, M.A.
Graduate Student
Department of Educational Administration
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(573) 424-0797

Marilyn Grady, Ph.D.
Professor
Department of Educational Administration
mgrady1@unl.edu
(402) 472-0974

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Project: Institutional Governance of New Program Development
Time of Interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer: Nathan Miller
Interviewee:
Position of Interviewee:

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this study. We have reviewed the Letter of Consent, which you have signed, and you have acknowledged that this interview will be recorded and then transcribed by me. After transcription, you will have the opportunity to review the interview and provide clarification or corrections.

The purpose of this study will be to investigate the approval process for new programs at universities. For this study, the approval process will focus on the administrative process after the curriculum has been developed at the departmental or college level.

Questions:

1. What is the process for new program development at your university?

   - Where does the demand for a new program initiate (faculty, students, administration, or external groups) and how is it proposed?
   - What internal departments or offices contribute to the development of new programs (marketing, enrollment management, academics, and compliance)?
   - Are any external agencies consulted during this process?
   - What is the standard time frame for developing a new program?
   - What steps in this process do you feel are vital for the creation of an academically sound program?

2. What external factors influence new program development at your university?

   - Do professional organizations or leaders provide recommendations for new programs?
   - Are programs at institutions of a similar size reviewed for possible development?

- Does the market demand for graduates with certain credentials impact new program development?

3. If tasked with designing a process for new program development from scratch, what would it entail?

Appendix D

IRB Approval Letter

September 30, 2011

Nathan Miller
Department of Educational Administration

Marilyn Grady
Department of Educational Administration
128 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20110911858 EX

Project ID: 11858

Project Title: Institutional Governance of New Program Development

Dear Nathan:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 09/30/2011.

1. The approved informed consent form has been uploaded to NUgrant (file with -Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use this form to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent form, please submit the revised form to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:
* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;

* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP for the IRB