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Pathways to Student Success: A Multiple Case Study on Four-Year Colleges'

Organizational Change in Performance Funding States

by

Lindsay K. Wayt

A DISSERTATION

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Pathways to Student Success: A Multiple Case Study on Four-Year Colleges'

Organizational Change in Performance Funding States

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University of Nebraska, 2015

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Abstract: Federal and state policies have recently moved the higher education accountability focus from access to completion. As completion and other student success accountability measures are put in place, institutions are going through organizational change to accommodate these new policies and to adjust their focus onto student success measures such as retention and graduation rates. This multiple case study's purpose was to describe the institutional efforts and changes at small- to medium-sized, four-year public institutions in states where at least 20% or more of state funds are or are planned to soon be allocated based on performance metrics. The findings of this study demonstrate the importance of organization planning, building organizational capacity for change, focusing on actions and changes that are efficient and effective, and refocusing on the culture of student success in teaching-focused institutions. Findings can be utilized by policymakers and higher education leaders at state and institution levels when considering or addressing the use of performance-based funding models and the effects that such policies have on public institutions of higher education.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

President Barack Obama set a goal for the United States “that by 2020, America would once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world” (The White House, 2014, para. 3). This goal reflects not only national interests but those of states, communities, employers, parents, and students. Quality outcomes from higher education are a concern of many in the nation. The White House administration (2014) further set the stage for higher education in the U.S. by citing that the American economy is now, more than ever, requiring employees with postsecondary degrees. However, the nation has fallen from the world lead in number of individuals holding four-year postsecondary degrees; the U.S. now ranks 12th in the number of 25-34 year olds with degrees. Information on The White House (2014) website continued by noting that “while more than half of college students graduate within six years, the completion rate for low-income students is around 25 percent” (para. 2).

With this push for increased numbers of students completing college also comes a push for institutional accountability. In addition to setting this goal, President Obama has also been working toward tying institutional performance to funding. A writer for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* described Obama’s plan of tying college ratings to student aid as “a mix of carrots and sticks” (Field, 2013, para. 1). The new plan offers the “carrots” of financial encouragement for colleges who enroll more Pell Grant eligible students, and the “sticks” of the program include holding colleges more accountable for retention rates, graduation rates, and attainment of gainful employment by graduates (Jaschik, 2013; Field, 2013). These ideas, presented by Obama during the “college cost’

bus tour” continued to be included in his accountability agenda for higher education in his budget proposal (Field, 2014, para. 7).

The federal government is not acting alone in this accountability agenda for higher education. In fact, historical evidence supports that several states, that also provide a larger proportion of funding to public higher education institutions, have utilized financial incentives or reporting to encourage college performance (Bogue & Bingham Hall, 2003; Dougherty & Natow, 2015; Dougherty, Natow, Hare & Vega, 2010; Long, 2010; McKeown-Moak, 2013). McKeown-Moak (2013) noted that “in 2000, at the height of the old form of performance funding in higher education, more than three-fifths of all states, 35 in all, engaged in at least one form of performance-based funding” (p. 3). These states have maintained the systems, seen the systems evolve, or abandoned them when they did not meet state needs.

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL, 2014, 2015) demonstrated the current use of and future plans for performance-based funding in 30 states. However, as McKeown-Moak (2013) explained, this new wave of performance-based funding shows a change in focus. Rather than allocating funding on institutional needs, states’ new funding models reflect the needs of their citizens and their economies.

Context of the Problem

This increased use of performance funding and shift in performance-based funding models across the United States presents an interesting dynamic in the status quo of higher education as well as the context for this research study. Public colleges and universities are finding themselves in a time of increased accountability tied to funding. Accountability measures tie funding to college completion rates, student progress to

degree per term, degrees awarded by program, employment rates of graduates, number of degrees awarded in priority fields (i.e., STEM, education, and health), number of degrees awarded to at-risk students (i.e., Pell recipients, minority students, non-traditional students), and other metrics as defined by individual state policies. Public higher education institutions and leaders within these institutions need to more purposefully focus institution resources and efforts to prioritize goals related to those set forth by policy leaders.

This refocusing of priorities could lead to organizational change as institution administration, staff, and faculty work to meet performance metrics established by state higher education policies. Specifically, the context of this research project relates to the possible organizational changes that are occurring and have been designed to influence college student success.

Problem Statement

Students who enroll in colleges and universities are not completing degrees or other desired outcomes at rates that satisfy stakeholders. Accountability measures for institutional performance are being or will be utilized in many states across the nation, and multiple performance metrics associated with institutional accountability are linked to student success (i.e., degree completion and/or progress toward degree per term enrolled, skill levels attained, employability, etc.). In order to earn state funding, institutions in states with performance funding, especially those states with larger amounts of funding tied to metrics as outlined by state policies, need to prioritize student success and the metrics set by performance funding policies. Organizational change to meet new priorities is likely to occur.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore and describe the organizational changes that are occurring at small- to medium-sized, four-year public institutions during a transition into performance accountability. The central research question was: *How is institutional change occurring at four-year public institutions to foster student success?* The following sub-questions were developed:

RQ1: How have institutions' missions and purposes, or the perceptions of these polices, changed or evolved in regards to student success?

RQ2: What environmental evidence exists that shows an institutional focus on student success efforts?

RQ3: How are structural and procedural changes occurring in decision-making, task orientation, and communication patterns for those involved in working toward student success?

RQ4: How do individuals working to implement institutional measures for student success assess the progress of their efforts?

Theoretical Framework

Political and education leaders who are taking the charge of performance-based funding policies across the nation are doing so in hopes of inciting positive changes in the outcomes of higher education. Because change toward increasing performance on various metrics designated by state leaders is the ultimate goal of these policies, it is fitting to utilize organizational change theory as a framework for exploring the changes occurring at institutions included in this study.

When describing her framework for understanding, leading, and enacting changes in higher education, Kezar (2014) considered six related theories of change: (1) scientific management, (2) evolutionary, (3) social cognition, (4) cultural, (5) political, and (6) institutional. She further advocated that although theories of change can be used to assist organizational leaders to analyze situations in which change may be needed and to consider what strategies may be useful, when considering acting, leaders or other change agents need to also consider the type of change, context of change, and leadership and agency. She advised that “all of these theories should be considered as providing insights to leaders” and that leaders and other change agents should not “choose a particular theory that they feel best suits their style or understanding” (p. 41). Thus, this framework demonstrates that change theories are to be used as analytical tools and that other facets of change that lay beyond theories must also be considered in a framework of change.

Kezar’s (2014) framework considers type of change, context for change, agency/leadership, and then the approach (or theories used) to change. Each of these four elements is a connected component in a framework of understanding change. This framework of change was considered in this present study as a guide for understanding how and why institutions and individuals within those institutions may have different perspectives on the changes occurring in their institutions. This framework was valuable in providing a foundation for understanding how higher education institutions address change.

Beyond understanding the change process from a theoretical perspective, I needed to understand how theories of change could be used to research institutional change efforts for student success at institutions in performance funding states. In an earlier

work, Kezar (2012) outlined five paradigms (functionalist, interpretive, critical, and postmodern) for approaching the research of change in higher education institutions. When considering the design for this research study, I used elements of both functionalist and interpretive paradigms with influences from the evolutionary and teleological functionalist schools of thought. The evolutionary functionalist school of thought suggests that change occurs due to external environmental factors, which, in this particular case are changes in state funding policies. This school of thought is also guided by the idea that the process of change is an adaptation and occurs gradually and is guided by teleological functionalist thought because the change is purposeful. Kezar (2012) suggested that the study of resource dependency has ties to the functionalist school of thought; this shows that approaching performance-based funding as a catalyst for change is appropriately considered from this viewpoint.

Those who identify with a functional paradigm see change as occurring through planning, external pressures, and usually done to maximize effectiveness and efficiency (Kezar, 2012). These assumptions about change parallel the expectations of policymakers designing performance-based funding plans across the nation. Therefore, it was necessary to include elements of this theoretical framework in this study. However, other stakeholders are affected through the institutional change process. Although policymakers have designed the plans, institution faculty and staff, who may have differing views on the policy, will implement them, and other stakeholders, such as students, will be affected by these changes. Because of these important considerations, this research also contains elements of an interpretive paradigm. In this paradigm, the outcomes of change may include shifts in organizational identify and culture and not just

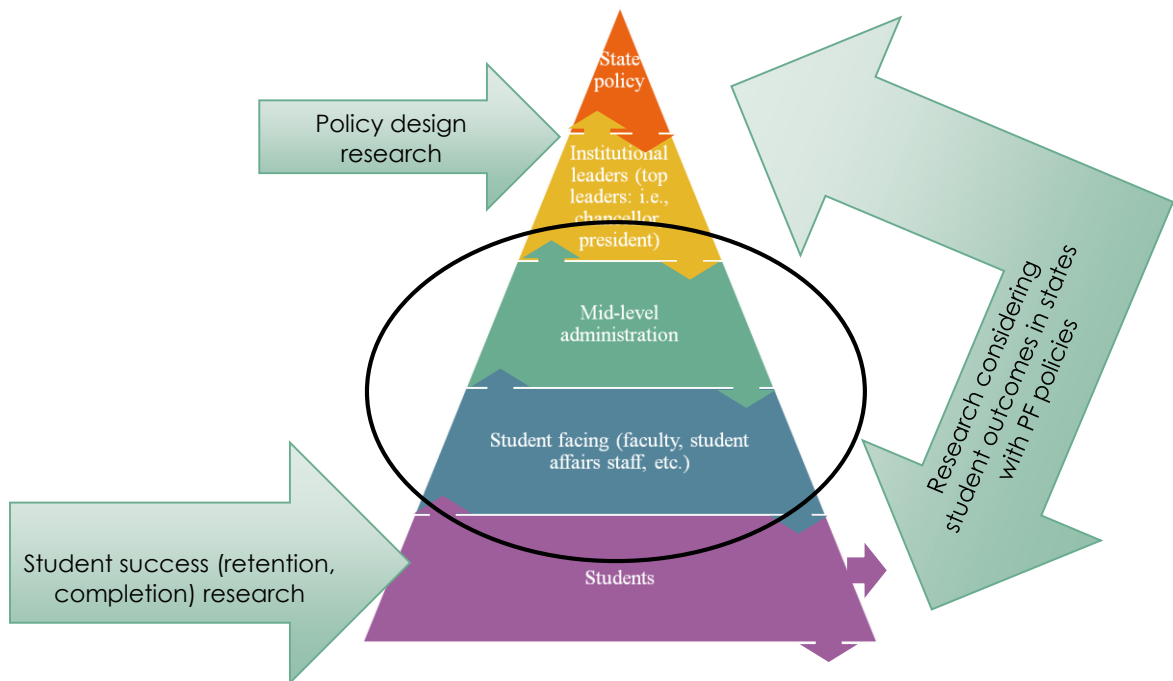
changes in processes and structures (Kezar, 2012). Also, researchers utilizing this framework will investigate multiple perspectives. Specifically, in this study I consider the viewpoints not only of policy leaders but of those individuals implementing institutional changes.

Model of Inquiry

Change in higher education institutions is complex. Because of this, it was important that I couch the theoretical framework within a model of inquiry. The model of inquiry allowed me to take into consideration the framework for change in higher education organizations as well as student success theories and previous research on performance-based funding policy design. The model of inquiry can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

Model of Inquiry for Study.



The model of inquiry demonstrates that the framework used for understanding organizational change, which is at the center of the model, focuses on the specific institutions of higher education studied within this project. Surrounding this framework that provided guidance in designing the research protocols are other theories and research studies related to the purpose of the study, research on performance funding policy design, research and theories on student success, and research linking performance funding and student outcomes. Each of these features of the model is addressed in detail in Chapter 2, which is a review of literature relevant to this study. However, each facet of the model of inquiry is now briefly addressed.

Readers should understand that most research related to performance funding has focused on either the policy design, research which focuses on policy purpose and stakeholders who are in positions of legitimate power such as state legislators, members of higher education commissioning boards, and senior administration within higher education institutions (Bogue & Bingham Hall, 2003; Bogue & Johnson, 2010; Burke, 1998; Burke & Modarresi, 2000; Dougherty et al., 2010; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013, 2011), or on the student outcomes, mostly retention and graduation rates, of institutions being affected by performance funding policies (Sanford & Hunter, 2011; Shin, 2010).

Tinto's Interactionist Theory has been considered the standard among higher education professionals when considering student success as being connected to the student-institution interaction (Braxton, 2003). Tinto's (1975, 1993, 2012) work demonstrates the importance of considering the actions of an institution in the student persistence process.

This means that in order to understand the link between the use of a performance funding policy and the student outcomes, one also needs to have an understanding of the organizational processes that serve as the glue between policy and student outcomes. This is where the theoretical framework provided guidance in this study. Kezar's (2014, 2012) framework and approach to research on changes in institutions of higher education facilitated the protocols for understanding changes occurring because of the implementation of a performance funding policy and having an intent to direct institutions' focus to student success outcomes.

Significance of the Study

This exploration has potential implications for both theory and practice. Results from this multiple-case study can be used to inform future qualitative and quantitative research focused on the connection between government accountability measures and institutional changes that addresses student success in higher education. The research method and results can serve as a guide for future researchers in the area of organizational change. The results may establish common themes related to creating practices that foster real organizational change for individual student success and institution success based on performance metrics.

Results and methodology can influence administrators, faculty, and staff at institutions of higher education. Currently, 30 states are using or will soon be using some form of performance-based funding model. Although this trend could ebb or flow, understanding interventions, programs, policies, or practices used to address student success has implications for future types of organizational or institutional change that may be necessitated by state policies. These possible future times of change may be

related to performance-based funding or other issues related to the higher education environment and students' abilities to navigate it successfully.

This inquiry established types of organizational restructuring that are occurring in 2015 and how these shifts influence students' abilities to find, access, and effectively utilize campus resources. Issues of structure, policy, and communication are explored, and the findings can provide guidance for improved internal management to foster both student success and institution performance.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The goal of this study was to explore and describe organizational changes that are occurring to address student success concerns in small- to medium-sized public institutions during a national transition period of increased use of performance funding policies by several states across the nation. Because of the nature of this research purpose, a historical perspective of performance-based funding policies as well as an understanding of the theories and practices utilized by higher education institutions builds the foundation upon which this study resided.

The common theme that ties all of the literature in this review together is student success. As the literature review demonstrates, the myriad of stakeholders who have vested interests in higher education in the United States have differing viewpoints regarding the success of institutions of higher education and the success of students who attend them. This has led authors to approach the study of higher education from the perspectives of policymakers, theorists, and practitioners (among others).

The purpose of this literature review was to provide an overview of student success literature from each of these three perspectives. Readers should gain knowledge of research completed to show a connections between student success and higher education policies, specifically policies related to funding; gain an understanding of student success theories; gain a working knowledge about interventions utilized by higher education professionals and the research completed on such interventions; and also gain a deeper insight into organizational change and the role of leadership within change that facilitates (or does not facilitate) change efforts to increase student success measures.

Higher Education Policy and Performance Funding

Historical and contemporary evidence shows that several states have utilized financial incentives or reporting to encourage college performance (Bogue & Bingham Hall, 2003; Dougherty, Natow, Hare & Vega, 2010; Long, 2010; McKeown-Moak, 2013). Different waves of funding trends have ebbed and flowed in the funding policies of higher education institutions over time (McKeown-Moak, 2013). The purpose of this section of the review is to consider the roots of contemporary use of performance-based funding, allowing readers to gain an insight into how the policies work in general, and also to consider specific uses of performance funding policies in some example states.

What is Performance-Based Funding?

Performance-based funding, called more simply “performance funding” by some, “uses a clearly specified formula to tie funding to institutional performance on indicators such as student retention, attainment of certain credit levels, and other student outcomes” (Dougherty & Reddy, 2011, p. 1). This idea is different from both performance budgeting and performance reporting. Performance budgeting is a term used when funding and performance are more indirectly related, and performance reporting is a term used when institutions are mandated to report their performance to the public (Shin, 2010, p. 48). Although these terms may share some features and may, by some, be used more interchangeably, readers will find these distinctions important when considering how the different links between institution performance and money have developed and changed over time.

To clarify the terms, the following hypothetical scenarios may be helpful to readers:

1. A community college is required, as a condition for receiving state funding, to report publicly on retention rates, number of credit hours accrued by students, and number of students earning particular degree types – this is an example of performance **reporting**.
2. A college’s budget amount is based on performance that has already been demonstrated, and the college sets performance targets for the future (possibly with influence from the government) – this is an example of performance **budgeting**.
3. An institution’s funding is tied directly to a set of metrics (i.e., number of credit hours earned per term, number of degrees granted, proportion of degrees granted to underrepresented populations, etc.) set by a government agency – this is an example of performance **funding**.

Types of Performance-Based Funding

As can be seen by the definitions and examples, the concepts of funding, budgeting, and reporting are often connected or similar. Historically, each has a connection to how educational and/or policy leaders in the United States have approached accountability in higher education. Even when only specifically considering performance-based funding, those involved in designing policy may take different approaches.

Performance-based funding types fall into two model categories. Some approach performance-based funding from the “set aside” approach in which a pre-determined amount of funds are earmarked by a funding agency until certain terms are met

(D'Amico, Friedel, Katsinas, & Thornton, 2013, p. 232). This approach to performance funding falls into the first category, which some have referred to as the “old wave” of performance funding (McKeown-Moak, 2013) and others have termed “Performance Funding 1.0” (PF 1.0) (Dougherty & Reddy, 2011). Dougherty & Reddy (2011) explained that in implementation, PF 1.0 often took the form of a “bonus.” Bogue (who was involved in the introduction of performance funding in Tennessee) and Johnson (2010) used a fictional example to explain how the set aside approach could be used to incentivize performance:

The maximum performance funding amount available to First Rate College would be 2% of USD 20 million, or USD 400,000. In other words, if First Rate College had absolutely perfect scores on each of the five performance indicators [this was the number of indicators in Tennessee’s first model of performance funding], its final appropriation recommendation to the Tennessee Legislature and governor would be USD 20.4 million. (p. 7)

This \$400,000 carrot demonstrates how those who initially began suggesting performance-based funding in policy believed the initiative would work. Institutions would be encouraged with bonus money to meet expectations set by specific indicators.

The other category of approaches has been termed Performance Funding 2.0 (PF 2.0) (Dougherty & Reddy, 2011). Dougherty and Reddy (2011) explained that in this category, the performance funding is no longer a bonus, and McKeown-Moak (2013) explained that this “new wave” of performance-based funding shows a shift to a stronger focus on “increased accountability and increased efficiency of operations” (p. 4). PF 2.0

is “output-based funding, which includes performance in funding formulas, and performance contracts, which represent agreements to provide a certain number of funding should an institution meet expected outcomes” (D’Amico et al., 2013, pp. 232-233). This approach involves the use of both the carrot and the stick; funding will be given for certain levels of performance but could also be reduced if other expectations are not met. This evolution of performance-based funding into the PF 2.0 that is becoming more evident makes sense when considering the recent political climate of accountability for higher education. No longer is it assumed that colleges are providing a service and should be rewarded for meeting other set indicators. This now quantifiable service and its impacts on students and communities is expected in this age of accountability, so institutions who do not “measure up” face consequences in their budgets.

Performance-Based Funding Indicators

“To measure performance requires agreed-upon indicators” (D’Amico et al., 2013, p. 234). If accountability is the key focus of performance-based funding, understanding what units of measure are used to assess colleges’ levels of success is important to those involved in designing plans for institutional success. In exploring literature related to performance-based funding, the information on performance indicators often was influenced by the various stakeholders of higher education. Therefore, in addressing indicators, researchers should consider not only what the indicators have been but also which stakeholders would have advocated for specific measures of success and how agreement was made (or not made) over such indicators (D’Amico et al., 2013).

After considering more concise definitions of indicators, Bogue and Bingham Hall (2003) offered the following comprehensive definition of performance indicators:

a publicly reported quantitative measure or evidence of educational resources, activity, or achievement (1) that furnishes intelligence on strategic operating conditions, (2) that facilitates evaluation of operating trends, goal achievement, efficiency, and effectiveness in benchmark relation to historic comparative, or criterion standards, and (3) that informs decision making on resource allocation and program/service improvement.

(p. 188)

This definition emphasizes the importance of the roles of multiple stakeholders in determining indicators to utilize for the purpose of making funding decisions for colleges. The definition reflects the links that exist among the public, the institution, and the funding agency (the state). Each has a vested interest in knowing to what degree the college is meeting both public and state expectations, and they typically expect that the degree of success on indicators can be demonstrated with easily understood and quantifiable measures.

To further understand how indicators can be used in higher education, it may be important to understand that different types exist. Burke (1998) succinctly explained:

Indicators types include input, process, output, and outcome measures.

Inputs represent the human, financial, and physical resources received to support programs and activities. Processes include the methods used to deliver these services. Outputs involve the quantity of the products

produced. Outcomes depict the quality or impact of programs, activities, and services on students, states, and society. (p. 53)

Simply put, indicators can be used to measure what goes in, through, and out of institutions. Indicators can demonstrate both quantity and quality – quantity in regards to number going in, through, and out, and quality in regards to degree of impact.

To further existing knowledge about performance indicators, Burke (1998) studied indicators that had been used in eleven states at various two- and four-year institutions. His results showed the use of some common indicators across states that included: (a) retention and graduation rates, (b) job placement, (c) two-to-four-year transfers, (d) faculty workload, (e) institutional choice, (f) graduation credits and time to degree, (g) licensure test scores, (h) transfer graduation rates, and (i) workforce training and development. Burke also noted that most states tend to prioritize or value output and process measures over input measures, and, at the time of his study, there was beginning evidence of outcome measures being valued.

When considering these examples of indicators of performance, one should be able to see, and Bogue and Bingham Hall (2003) also point out, that these measures can be used at both campus and state levels. Data gathered can be used by campuses to make institution level decisions, and these indicators can also lead to state policy and funding decisions that can affect operations at intuitions of higher education. Burke (1998) concurred, explaining that indicators can be used externally to hold institutions accountable and internally to allow institutions to improve. These two purposes – external accountability and institutional improvement – show the importance of considering multiple stakeholders when determining indicators that should have funding

tied to them. Although campus leaders, policy makers, business leaders, students, parents, and other stakeholders may have similar goals for higher education, approaches to how this success should be measured may vary with the perspectives of the stakeholders. Some may see a need to consider inputs when determining how to assess outputs and outcomes; for example, when considering access issues, a higher education leader may see it necessary to consider the demographics of students entering and graduating from an institution. Some may have a more singular focus on skills attained; for example, a business leader may be concerned about the process and outcomes of a particular program of study.

Considering the literature on performance-based funding including what types exist and how indicators can be used in determining performance, one could construct a picture of how this funding model should work in theory. Stakeholders (one group or the multiple groups addressed previously) determine how to measure the success of higher education institutions, and then a certain amount of funding (either bonus funding or general funding) is tied to how well an institution measures on the set indicators. This kind of funding can allow for external stakeholders to hold the institution accountable on the set indicators, and it can also allow for internal improvements to increase scores on the set indicators.

Historical Examples of Performance-Based Funding

Although readers may have a general understanding of what performance-based funding is and how it should work, considering the historical examples of states that have implemented various forms of this funding model is valuable. McKeown-Moak (2013) explained that by the end of the 1990s, 35 states had engaged in some form of the “old

wave” of performance-based funding (p. 3). Evidence from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL, 2015) noted that there are 34 states using or transitioning into using a method of performance-based funding. These pieces of evidence show a strong historical and current presence of performance-based funding. Since it is beyond the scope of this review to consider all of the states that use, have used, or have explored using performance-based funding, only a few key state examples will be addressed.

All examples included are states in which performance-based funding was used at four-year institutions (some used this funding model with two-year colleges as well), but examples differ in other aspects. Tennessee, which will be addressed in depth, was chosen to consider in this review because it has the longest history of use of performance-based funding. Three other states will be briefly considered to provide a more broad perspective of performance-based funding. South Carolina was included as an early example of a state utilizing performance-based funding for 100% of state higher education allocations. Missouri and Pennsylvania were included as examples of how this funding model was implemented in different time periods.

Tennessee. Tennessee is cited as the first state in the United States to formally adopt performance-based funding (Banta, Rudolph, Van Dyke, & Fisher, 1996; Bogue & Bingham Hall, 2003; Dougherty et al., 2010; Dougherty & Reddy, 2011; McKeown-Moak, 2013; McLendon & Hearn, 2013; Sanford & Hunter, 2011). McLendon and Hearn (2013) noted that prior to the 1980s, “references to accountability in public higher education systems usually referred to the changing roles of statewide authorities in balancing needed public oversight of institutions with the valued traditions of campus

authority” (para. 3). The new accountability movement formally began in Tennessee in 1979-80 and has had a long history of shifts and changes.

In the mid-1970s, higher education leaders began looking to performance funding as an option for the state, and, following a five-year pilot program, formally launched performance-based funding in 1979 with funds first being allotted during the 1980-81 academic year (Dougherty et al., 2010; Dougherty & Reddy, 2011). Banta et al. (1996) explained that Grady Bogue and Wayne Brown, chief Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) architects for the plan in the state, were working to combine accountability and improvement purposes when they designed the plan (p. 26). In regards to accountability, leaders in the higher education community in Tennessee were attempting to be proactive through their pursuit of performance funding (Bogue & Bingham Hall, 2003). The authors explained:

The hope was that this initiative might forestall the imposition of performance measures and assessments by political action, which had occurred at elementary and secondary education and for higher education in many states in the form of legislation and regulation requiring different forms of assessment and accountability. (p. 199)

Thus, the stakeholders from within higher education leadership in the state were proactive in leading the charge for accountability through performance funding measures. Research also points that the use of performance funding by institutions in Tennessee was a method for institutions to get additional funding. The initial model used in the state provided for to a 2% bonus funding allocation for institutions who achieved goals set by

the five original performance indicators (Dougherty et al., 2010; Dougherty & Reddy, 2011).

The five initial indicators used for performance-based funding in Tennessee included: (a) program accreditation; (b) graduates' performance on exams within their major field; (c) graduates' performance on general education outcomes as assessed by a nationally normed exam; (d) evaluation of institutional programs as assessed via surveys of students, alumni, and employers; and (e) evaluation of academic programs through a peer review process (Banta et al., 1996; Dougherty et al., 2010; Dougherty & Reddy, 2011). After some adjustments to indicators during the first few years of implementation, the state also began a five-year cycle of revision that allowed for flexibility with the performance indicators used (Banta et al., 1996). Over time the amount of performance funds that institutions could receive increased from 2 to 5 to 5.45% (Dougherty et al., 2010; Dougherty & Reddy, 2011). The increase in funds could signify a growing support for the performance-based funding model within the state over time.

As Dougherty et al. (2010) highlighted in the evolution of performance-based funding in Tennessee, it is important to note the creators and supporters of the model. As already acknowledged, creators came from within the higher education leadership. A participant in Dougherty et al.'s (2010) study explained, "This policy was not shoved down our throats by a legislature. It was not imposed in any way. It was something that [THEC] developed from within" (p. 12). Researchers also noted the support, although less active than that of higher education leaders, from within the elected officials and business communities (pp. 14-16). Although not involved in the details of the plan, the support of these groups indirectly guided the higher education community because

leaders in education worked to anticipate needs and expectations of the state and businesses. Also, without the general support of elected officials, state funding for the plan would not have existed. Although performance funding received significant support in the state, Dougherty et al. (2010) also acknowledged some opposition. Some believed that the performance funds were only coming at the expense of regular, enrollment funds, and others were concerned about the vagueness of some of the indicators. However, this opposition was minimal and not vocal.

Because Tennessee has utilized performance-based funding for several years, researchers have had several opportunities to study its effectiveness from various perspectives using different methodologies. Banta et al. (1996) conducted a survey of the campus coordinators for Tennessee's performance-based funding. Campus coordinators are individuals responsible for compiling the annual performance-funding report at the state's 23 public colleges and universities. The survey used in the study allowed researchers to conduct both statistical analysis and consideration of open-ended questions. All campus coordinators completed the surveys for a 100% completion rate. The survey had four questions: one asking participants to give a grade (A, B, C, D, or F) on the ten standards as measure of quality, one asking if each of the ten standards had promoted institutional improvement at his/her campus, and two open-ended questions asking participants to explain which indicators were most helpful in promoting campus improvements and suggestions for change.

Overall respondents gave a "lukewarm" assessment of performance funding in Tennessee (Banta et al., 1996, p. 40). However, as the researchers indicated, one respondent provided a grade of "F" on all but two measures (p. 38), and with a sample of

only 23, such outliers can have a large impact on overall results. Also, although surveying campus coordinators of the program allowed researchers to gain the perspective of those involved with performance-based funding on a day-to-day basis, researchers also worried the selected participants may have affected the results because this group was more likely to be “candid and vocal critics” (p. 40). Although the authors suggested that candid responses could be a limitation to this study, others may see this as a strength. Those considering implementing or reforming performance-based funding models should take into consideration the “lukewarm” endorsement from those who worked closely with the program under this regime and with the specific indicators of the time.

In *Measuring Up 2006*, a national report card on higher education, Tennessee received an “incomplete” for student learning (Baxter, Brant, & Forster, 2007, p. 4). However, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) believed that student learning was measured through the performance funding criteria, so they elicited the assistance of three doctoral students from Vanderbilt University. Baxter, Brant, and Forster (2007) used qualitative methodologies for two research purposes: (1) to understand the relationship between the learning model used in *Measuring Up 2006* and the criteria used in performance funding in Tennessee, and (2) to understand the impact that Tennessee’s performance funding model has on the student learning culture.

One of the limits of the study conducted by Baxter, Brant, and Forster (2007) was that only three institutions were selected from the entire state, and institutions were selected on the criteria of the proximity of their location to the researchers. The criteria of location to the doctoral students is convenient, but may not have been the best

purposeful sampling method. Each of the institutions selected revived a request to participate from the executive director of the THEC. Although the institutions may have been willing to participate, the fact that they were asked by someone who oversees how funding mechanisms are designed may have influenced their overall willingness to comply. One of the benefits of the sample selection was that three different kinds of institutions were included: a community college, a college under the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) system, and a university from within the University of Tennessee (UT system).

When considering the criteria used by *Measuring Up 2006*, the researchers looked to previous publications and learned that Tennessee's assessment plan did not allow for data to be collected in all of the studies used to assess colleges in the national report card (Baxter, Brant, & Forster, 2007). Based on their findings, researchers suggested that the state pay close attention to metrics used on future national report card initiatives to ensure that they are able to provide necessary evidence. This suggestion makes sense for the particular purpose of this study, but it also makes one wonder about the use of national standard metrics in assessing colleges across the country.

Based on the interviews conducted at the three sample sites, four themes were developed from the data: (a) undergraduate education and major field of study, (b) program review and accreditation, (c) institutional commitment to student learning and engagement, and (d) knowledge of performance funding (Baxter, Brant, & Forster, 2007). However, of the 33 interviews conducted across three institutions, a majority of participants were administration and faculty with only three academic staff members interviewed in total. Based on the findings from interviews, the researchers provide three

recommendations; two recommendations were related to the continued practice of peer review, and the other related to faculty training on instructional pedagogies. The first recommendations make sense in light of the strong value institutional faculty and staff place on the peer review process; many in this study and the previous one stressed this as important to institutional improvement. Participants in this study expressed frustration at not understanding the “how to” in achieving performance funding goals. This means that pedagogical professional development would likely have a positive impact on those institutions. However, professional development on another aspect of process – how to read and utilize data – may also be beneficial for faculty and staff at those institutions.

Bogue and Johnson (2010) considered performance funding in Tennessee in a policy audit of the program. The researchers used data collected from performance funding initiatives over the course of 25 years as well as information gathered from a series of doctoral dissertations from the University of Tennessee over the 1999-2000 academic year. Understanding the researchers’ positioning is important for this article in particular. At the time of publication for this article, Johnson was serving as the Assistant Executive Director for the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), which plays a significant role in overseeing the performance funding initiatives in the state. Bogue, a professor at the University of Tennessee at the time of publication, was one of the original architects for the performance funding system in the state during his tenure with the THEC.

In the first part of their audit, Bogue and Johnson (2010) traced the evolution and data gathered by performance funding initiatives in the state of Tennessee. Data presented indicated growth and flexibility of the program by demonstrating the

adjustments in indicators used in both type, number, and weight. The authors attributed this development to overall success: “The policy design effort was patient, persistent and participatory” (p. 6). The researchers presented numerical measures demonstrating growth in the areas of accredited programs, general education outcomes, student satisfaction, persistence to graduation, and job placements. Although the researchers admitted that some growth was only modest, they did posit that the scores showed success when compared to national norms. For the most part, the statistical data demonstrated that performance funding had promoted institutional improvements over the course of its history in Tennessee.

In the second part of their audit, Bogue and Johnson (2010) included summaries of a series of case studies that were completed by a group of five doctoral students at the University of Tennessee. The five case studies considered as part of this audit included one of a doctoral research university, a doctoral university, a comprehensive university, two community colleges, and a qualitative study among educational and civic leaders in the state of Tennessee. The qualitative findings seemed more varied than the quantitative evidence. Although the case studies showed some evidence that suggested the existence of a culture of institutional improvement due to the performance funding measures, findings also showed variance across participants groups. Individuals involved with performance funding initiatives from administrative roles within institutions or those involved as civic leaders were more aware of the policy and seemed to see its influence more clearly. However, participants in the case studies who were not senior level administrators at institutions lacked awareness of policy details and did not seem to attribute institutional success or improvement to the policy. Supporters of performance

funding, and in particular advocates in Tennessee, have posited the importance of collaboration and participation in this accountability and improvement policy; these findings that non-senior staff are not connected to the policy details seem interesting when considered in this light.

Sanford and Hunter (2011) examined the impacts of the performance indicators in Tennessee on the four-year retention and six-year graduation rates of students at four-year institutions in the state. Although the purpose of this study only focused on a few indicators of success, retention and graduation rates, the results contributed evidence that demonstrates some degree of the overall effectiveness of the policy on educational outputs within the state. The researchers asserted that Tennessee was an ideal state to conduct research on the effects of performance funding indicators because of the state's stable program. The stable existence of the policy allowed the researchers to quantitatively and quasi-experimentally study effects over a specific time period, which was beneficial since previous work has shown that institutions adapt to change incrementally and not instantaneously. Sanford and Hunter's (2011) analysis showed no statistically significant difference in retention and graduation rates in Tennessee institutions as compared to their peer institutions. Although growth in these indicators was not statistically significant, growth did exist in terms of raw numbers. The researchers posited that institutions in Tennessee could meet performance funding expectations without actually improving overall outcomes. However, they did explain that "it would be a mistake to conclude from [the] findings that performance-funding has not been an effective policy" (p. 19). Although their results did not show increased

outcomes in regards to performance, they did suggest that the policy could have resulted in quality assurance of higher education.

Research on performance funding in Tennessee seems to show a mixed review. Proponents of the program have posited that the policy has led to institutional improvements while also allowing for stakeholders to hold public higher education in the state accountable on success indicators. However, some data, both quantitative and qualitative, has suggested that some measures are only minimally effective in regards to both measuring success and encouraging improvement. Despite mixed findings in the research in regards to the effectiveness of performance-based funding in Tennessee, other states' educational, political, and business leaders have supported similar measures in their states (Banta et al., 1996; Dougherty et al., 2011; McKeown-Moak, 2013). Tennessee will also continue to lead states in the Performance Funding 2.0 initiatives; currently, the state is transitioning into a phase of tying nearly all state appropriations to performance metrics without using performance funding as bonus funding (NCSL, 2014).

South Carolina. South Carolina's performance-based funding system was one of the more extreme used in the 1990s in the United States. In 1996, legislation was passed in South Carolina that mandated that 100% of state higher education appropriations would be based on performance (Bogue & Bingham Hall, 2003; Dougherty et al., 2010). These appropriations would be allocated based on nine success factors that had a total of 37 indicators. Heller (2004) described this policy as having an "all or nothing nature" and was seen in stark contrast to the contemporary initiatives in other states (p. 56). Considering the significance of 100% of state funds tied to a large number of indicators,

one may have expected education leaders to face obstacles when approaching this extreme policy.

Another interesting feature of South Carolina's performance-based funding is the advocates and supporters of the policy. Unlike Tennessee's experience of the performance-based measures coming from within the higher education community, South Carolina's performance funding initiative was led from outside of the higher education community. Both Dougherty et al. (2010) and Heller (2004) cited Nikki Setzler, a senator in the state, as the primary driving force behind the initiative. Senator Setzler, along with a coalition of other legislators and business community leaders, took charge of pushing the plan through to law with a strong effort to make the higher education community in the state more market-like (Dougherty et al., 2010). However, higher education leaders in the state were left on the periphery of the planning. Considering the lack of collaboration and high stakes involved, it is likely predictable and understandable that this form of higher education funding did not last in the state.

Missouri. Missouri, unlike South Carolina, had a more stable experience with performance-based funding. Missouri began performance-based funding in 1993 as one of the first to seek such initiatives as part of the wave of performance-funding policies enacted in the 1990s (Dougherty et al., 2010). Dougherty et al. (2010) noted that this "system attracted a lot of attention from policymakers and analysts nationwide because it had been carefully designed and seemed likely to last a long time" (p. 19). It did. Missouri's plan was designed in collaboration with stakeholders from both political and education leaders, with differentiated indicators for community colleges and four-year institutions, and with clear goals. Like other performance-based funding policies,

Missouri's underwent changes, had difficult periods (especially when funding waned or even disappeared), but also adjusted. Missouri is utilizing performance-based funding today (NCSL, 2014).

Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania higher education leaders implemented performance funding in 2003, and the policy has been in place since. Thus, reviewing performance-based funding measures in this state allows for a perspective on a state who put the policy into place later (after the height of the first-wave of performance funding in the 1990s) but that also shows a more lasting system. Cavanaugh and Garland (2012) noted that when considering the use of models in other states, the “actual results of this strategy are mixed” (p. 35). Having seen the use of performance funding models in other states prior to implementation in their own state gave Cavanaugh and Garland, chancellor and executive vice chancellor for the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, a chance to see what works and does not work in other settings.

Despite this benefit of prior knowledge, Cavanaugh and Garland (2012) also noted the revisions for more flexibility in the Pennsylvania plan. Leaders admitted a need to move away from a “one-size-fits-all” model of performance funding and to make the number of indicators used more manageable. The lessons the authors noted from their experiences reflect common themes of lessons learned from other models of performance funding: (a) make sure goals are clear, (b) foster transparency, (c) rely on collaboration, (d) align state goals with national goals, (e) be consistent/persevere through difficult times, and (f) have periodic times for system evaluation and adjustments.

Multiple-State Research. Burke and Modarresi (2000) used a survey to gain perspectives on performance-based funding in Tennessee and Missouri. The original survey that was part of the study was sent to state and campus policy makers in nine states with performance-based funding; however, responses from some states were not included because their performance funding systems were not identified as being stable. Tennessee and Missouri, having shown stability in their programs, were analyzed for the purpose of this study. This research focused on the views of state and campus leaders and the degree to which members of these stakeholder groups viewed the function and effectiveness of performance-based funding. The researchers had predicted finding the following elements to be important in stable performance-funding programs: (a) collaboration between state and institution officials, (b) goals for both external accountability and institutional improvement, (c) evidence that policy values stressed quality over efficiency, (d) sufficient time for planning, (e) an agreeable number of indicators used, (f) the use of a peer review process for success, (g) an effective amount of funding tied to the measure, (h) a preference for additional/bonus funding tied to performance, (i) that individual institutions' missions and goals were considered, (j) stable state priorities, and (k) an expectation of the plan being implemented for the long-term. Their results were consistent with expectations. The authors briefly noted some of the information gathered from states with non-stable performance funding measures. This acknowledgement was important because it reminded readers that implementing any policy would have challenges, but with performance-funding in particular, there are ways of approaching the plan that can gain more buy-in and progress, namely collaboration among stakeholders. Sanford and Hunter (2011) suggested that stakeholders in the future

may have to balance the “attractive goals against its definite difficulties” when making decisions about performance funding measures (p. 448).

Shin (2010) also examined performance accountability in multiple states. This was a quantitative study completed using institutional data available on the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); a total of 123 research universities, master universities, and liberal arts colleges were included in the study. Because of the larger number of institutions included, Shin (2010) was able to consider the potential impacts of performance-based budgeting, funding, and reporting. This ability to include comparisons with different policies was a benefit to this study. However, the results are similar to other research considered; performance-based funding, as well as budgeting and reporting, did not exhibit a significant influence on institutional performance. Shin’s (2010) results showed that institutional characteristics accounted for more of the variance between institutions than did any state policy measure. However, Shin (2010), like other authors, offered suggestions for improvement to the policy; one suggestion, which resonated with suggestions of other researchers, was that perhaps the policies needed to be more grounded in institutional practices.

Student Success Theoretical Perspectives

Student success issues, such as retention, attrition, persistence, engagement and involvement, grew as an increasingly common topic in higher education communities beginning in the 1970s (Berger & Lyon, 2005). The purpose of this section of the review is to consider the foundational and contemporary theoretical perspectives on student success, specifically retention and graduation rates. The works of Tinto, Bean, Braxton, and Astin will be included in this review.

Tinto's Interactionalist Theory

When considering college student departure and theoretical views on student retention, Vincent Tinto's Interactionalist Theory has been the standard among higher education professionals (Braxton, 2003). Tinto (1975, 1993) explained that previous research related to student departure from higher education institutions focused on individual student characteristics. Although he said this, too, was valuable to understanding students' decisions to leave institutions, this type of research left out the role of institutions. Tinto (1993) used the work of anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep on the rites of passage and the work of Emile Durkheim on suicide to help formulate a more encompassing theory of student departure. Tinto's theory stresses the importance of individual student characteristics, students' goals/commitments, institutional expectations, student integration into the institution community, and the institution's goals and commitments to the overall student departure decision process. His model showed the importance of considering the student and the institution as well as the processes of transition and integration.

Attitude-Behavior Theory and Student Retention

John P. Bean's (1981, 2005; Eaton & Bean, 1995) work demonstrated the importance of also understanding the importance of student behavior and attitudes in regards to student persistence. Over the course of several years, Bean developed various models to help explain student persistence decisions. His work highlighted the importance of understanding students' background and individual characteristics. Bean (2005) asserted that "student departure is the result of the intention to leave. Intention is based on prematriculation attitudes and behaviors that affect the way a student interacts

with the institution” (pp. 217-218). His work highlighted the importance of student intentions, institutional fit, and the psychological process in student persistence choices.

Student Involvement Theory

Alexander W. Astin’s (1985, 1999) work highlighted the importance of understanding the levels of students’ involvement in college life. Involvement relates to the amount of energy that a student puts into his/her college experiences, including both physical and psychological energy or how much action and thought is put into college-related activities. Astin (1999) also related his theory of involvement to student persistence, noting that students who are more involved in college activities are also more likely to persist. His theory also allows for the consideration of both student and institution characteristics. For example, participating in student activities, like a fraternity or sorority (individual choice) and living in a campus residence hall (possibly institutional or individual choice) are factors related to increased student involvement.

Student Engagement

Another important factor when considering student success is student engagement. George D. Kuh (2009) explained, “Student engagement represents the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities” (p. 683). This shows the relationship between Kuh’s work on student engagement and the desired outcomes of stakeholders with interests in higher education. Specifically, this work highlights the “connection between collegiate quality and student engagement” (Kuh, 2003, p. 24). Kuh is likely most known for his work with the National Survey of

Student Engagement (NSSE). The NSSE, a nationally used and recognized survey, uses benchmarks as a “window into student and institutional performance” (p. 26).

As is evidenced, research on student success theories had developed over several years. In his most recent book, Tinto (2012) noted that over the course of time between 1980 and 2011, college access has more than doubled; however, during that same time period, college completion rates have increased only slightly. He argued for a need for effective action to address issues related to college student success, or lack thereof. In making his argument, Tinto (2012) put forth a framework for institutional action related to student success. This framework highlighted the conditions for student success: expectations, support, assessment and feedback, and involvement. There is no individual “secret” to student success, but Tinto argued that institutions aiming for success would at some point need to address each of the elements of the framework.

Empirical Studies on Interventions for Student Success

In addition to research on the theories, models, and frameworks related to student success, empirical research has addressed specific practices, programs, and procedures implemented at institutions that have influenced student success. Researchers and practitioners have been working to consider different modes of interventions that can address attrition and low retention and promote student persistence and success. These interventions occur under both academic and student affairs umbrellas and include utilizing engaging methods of instruction; providing academic supports that include summer programs, intrusive advising, and tutoring; implementing learning communities; and other interventions with the focus of encouraging student engagement and

involvement with campus curriculum, activities, and other members of the campus community.

Multiple studies have been completed over the years utilizing theories to understand student success. Braxton (2003) noted that by early 1995, Tinto's theory alone had been cited over 400 times and used in 170 doctoral dissertations. Including all uses of the theorists included in this review is far beyond the scope of this piece and likely those of most other works. Therefore, the purpose of this section of the review is to provide literature that considers research that provides more contemporary examples of research and also highlights the use of theory in both academic and student affairs settings.

Braxton, Jones, Hirschy, and Hartley (2008) explained that active learning “stands as an important pedagogical practice” (p. 71). Active learning has been identified to increase student course learning, and “faculty use of active learning practices directly and indirectly affects college student departure decisions” (pp. 71-72). The work of these researchers focused on showing the connection between active learning strategies used by professors and students' social integration into the campus. They hypothesized that “the more frequently students perceive that faculty members use active learning practices in their courses, the more that students perceive that their college or university is committed to its students' welfare” (p. 74). Their study supported this hypothesis. Because of their findings, these researchers suggested that faculty development activities should include a focus on the development and use of active learning practices. They also suggested tying the use of these practices to the tenure and promotion of faculty.

In a study focused on student learning, Barber (2012) revisited and extended the ideas associated with active learning; specifically, he focused on the integration of learning. Three categories integration of learning emerged from his data: connection, application, and synthesis. Barber explained that connection “involves identifying a similarity or common thread between ideas, skills, or pieces of information” (p. 602). He cited examples of students who were able to connect work between different courses or those who were able to connect coursework to experiences outside of the classroom. When considering the theme of application, Barber explained that “students described experiences where they used one idea or skill elsewhere in both formal and informal contexts, both in and out of the classroom” (p. 603). The category of synthesis “includes instances when two or more ideas come together to form a new idea or concept” (p. 605). Barber used the example of one student working to meld the beliefs he was taught about intelligent design in a Christian school he attended with the different perspectives he was gaining in a biology class at his college. To promote this kind of learning, Barber provided suggestions for faculty and other higher education professionals. Barber suggested that professionals “invite conversations with students,” “actively bridge contexts for and with students,” “promote perspective taking,” and “encourage reflection” (pp. 610-611). He continued by noting that “the findings demonstrate that integration of learning is not limited to the classroom, residence hall, or any one specific context” (p. 614). Likely his colleagues working outside the classroom – either in student affairs positions or administrative positions – would agree.

Intrusive advising is one of the interventions used at multiple campuses to address the retention issue. In her dissertation, Miller (2010) sought to better understand

intrusive advising and the impact that this intervention has on student self-efficacy.

Miller sampled first-year students at a four-year private university; she interviewed them at the beginning and end of their first time at the university about their relationships with their advisors. These students also completed the College Self Efficacy Inventory. The structure of her design allowed her to consider student initial expectations and to consider if any change in student self-efficacy existed in her participants. Miller's work showed two major themes that impacted student confidence: "1) the support and structure of the university and 2) their academic success in college-level courses" (p. 112). She also noted that "support and structure were synonymous with faculty and academic advisors" (p. 112). This shows that both faculty and academic advisors played a role in the development of student self-efficacy. When writing specifically about student comments about academic advisors, Miller mentioned that students felt a sense of "security and reassurance" because of the relationship with their advisors (p. 113).

Another common intervention practice designed to address student retention issues is the first-year seminar, first-year course, freshmen seminar, first-year experience course, etc. Regardless of its name, a function of these courses is that they are provided to first-year college students and usually with an intent of introducing them or enculturating them to the life at a particular college or university. In his dissertation, Reece (2013) considered the student perspective of the student-teacher engagement in a first-year studies course at a large southeastern research university. He used qualitative research methods and interviewed eight students who were enrolled with five of the different ten instructors of this university's first-year studies course. Three themes emerged from his data: "(1) Teacher-Student Rapport; (2) Course Facilitation; and (3)

Student-Student Interactions Inside and Outside of the Classroom” (p. 31). The students who participated in the study noted feelings of anxiety prior to the instructor establishing a rapport with them. Participants explained that the teachers of these courses “reached out” to students and made them feel welcome (p. 32). Once rapport was developed inside the classroom, students were even comfortable meeting with instructors one-on-one. Students also appreciated the hands-on nature of the course and the opportunities that they had to collaborate. Much of these themes relate to the work of the foundational authors in the area of student retention that have already been addressed as part of this literature review.

Other researchers have focused on the role of those working in student support offices. Specifically, Kelley-Hall (2010) studied Student Support Services counselors’ roles in encouraging student involvement. Student Support Services is one of the federal Trio programs; Student Support Services (SSS) has the function of providing “academic assistance and encouragement to academically disadvantaged populations” (p. 1). Many SSS programs across the nation work to “encourage students to get involved and integrated into campus life” (p. 8). Kelley-Hall utilized Astin’s theory on student involvement when designing her research framework. She had study participants discuss their experiences with their campus’s SSS program in focus groups. Participants in this study “stated that the counselors and tutors are the program’s strength because they keep track of student grades and progress in class” (p. 120). Counselors also helped to facilitate communication with course instructors and provided support with other personal and academic issues.

Student involvement in campus life was also important in Chatriand's (2012) dissertation work on exploring the effects of different connection groups on students' GPAs and retention. In his research, Chatriand (2012) considered three campus connection programs, learning communities, academic skills courses, and Greek organizations, and their connection to student members' GPAs and retention. He used the work and theories of Tinto, Bean, and Astin to guide his study. Chatriand used data collected from an institution's Office of the Registrar and the Office of Financial Aid to look at four cohorts of students. The impacts on students' participation in these three groups varied by the group in which they participated. Student membership in a Greek organization had a positive connection to the student's likelihood of being retained to both their second and third year, but membership in a Greek organization did not have a significant relationship to GPA. Students who were involved in learning communities showed positive relationships with GPA and retention. Students enrolled in academic success courses showed a negative connection to GPA and no impact on retention.

One program that several campuses utilizes to in an effort to increase retention of at-risk students is the summer bridge program. Arena (2013) studied this particular intervention as part of her thesis. She utilized Tinto's work to frame her study as she looked at one particular summer bridge program that exposed students to resources on campus, provided knowledge about study skills, fostered socialization, and allowed students to earn college credits over the summer. Her goal was to ascertain if participation in the summer bridge program fostered students' perceived levels of academic, social, and institutional integration. Although Arena was not able to conclusively determine that the particular bridge program she studied had an impact, this

may have been because of her study design. Arena compared successful students, those who were graduating, in her study. She compared students who were graduating and had participated in the program to students who were graduating but had not participated. Thus, both groups showed integration, but both groups were also successfully completing college. This may explain why little difference was seen in what they attributed this success to.

Organizational Change and Leadership

Theories and studies focusing on how organizations, in particular higher education institutions, change and how they are led through the change process is also important within the context of this study. Although previous research has not focused on the change process as a specific result of the implementation of a state performance-based funding policy, literature addressing change theories and research are pertinent to providing a context for understanding the change process of institutions of higher education.

In addressing leading change in the 21st century, Hickman (2010) utilized a model that considered concepts of organizational change, concepts of leadership, change practices, and the purpose of change. Each of these elements was identified as having an influence on the complex change process. Hickman (2010) explained, “Leading change often occurs when organizations anticipate, respond to, or adapt to challenges and opportunities in their internal or external environment” (p. 35). Specifically, change often occurs when leaders and other organization members want to generate some type of improvement within some aspect of the organization. Change is used to bring about positive outcomes. This statement seems simple, and, as Hickman (2010) continued to

explain, institutions in the 21st century exist in a complex time when linear thinking and processes to facilitate change is not a reality. Change is complicated by internal and external environmental factors, the multiple participants in the change process, and the idea that change is a fluid process (not something that occurs within one episode).

In her book *Leading Change in Multiple Contexts*, Hickman (2010) asked readers to consider what kind of organizational change is needed, what type of leadership is needed to facilitate that type of change, and what practices could be employed to implement the needed change. When considering each of these questions, she provided readers with ways of considering each. For example, when addressing the type of organizational change needed, Hickman (2010) provided readers with five change types: (1) life cycle, (2) teleological, (3) dialectical, (4) chaos/complexity, and (5) evolutionary. Each of these types had multiple, more specific theories of change included with them. Life cycle type change is innately a part of an organization and is analogous to the stages of organic growth (birth, adolescence, adulthood, and death or recovery). Teleological type change occurs through the use of goals in moving toward a desired outcome. Dialectical change posits that change occurs as a result of conflicts in which opposing views are synthesized for change. Chaos type changes occur in complex situations in which one searches for patterns and themes within the complex system. Evolutionary change types focus on organizational learning over long periods of time. When considering these five change types, leaders and other organizational members are asked to utilize the one that best fits their current change circumstance.

Just as there are different change types to consider, Hickman (2010) posited that there are different concepts of leadership to considering when analyzing for

organizational change. She acknowledged, “Complex organizational settings make it difficult to create a framework for leading change that links only one leadership concept to any one theory of change” (p. 55). Thus, Hickman provided readers with an expansive list of leadership types, too many to be addressed within the scope of this literature review. However, the variances in the leadership types are noted to be in the degree to which leadership is shared with followers, how leaders elicit support from followers, and how leaders facilitate actions. What is noteworthy in Hickman’s (2010) summary and analysis of the many specific types and theories of leadership is that as a change component, leadership “is a collective process in which no single form or concept of leadership will accomplish the change the organizational members wish to achieve” (p. 75). Thus, when working toward change, leaders will need to employ elements of various leadership practices.

Once concepts of change and concepts of leadership have been assessed, Hickman (2010) explained that specific change practices or strategies can be considered. She posited that there is no formula to choosing which practices to use to facilitate change. Hickman (2010) explained eight elements of practices of change: (a) collective, (b) adaptive, (c) strategic, (d) stages of change, (e) scenario building, (f) appreciative inquiry, (g) E-practices, and (h) ethical. Although it is beyond the scope of this literature review to summarize each change practices, readers should note that strategies included the consideration of change as a process. The practices considered suggested different stages or steps to address change implementation that varied in how stakeholders were guided through change.

Kezar (2014) specifically considered organizational change with the context of higher education. Readers should note the connections between Hickman's (2010) framework for considering organizational change in multiple contexts and Kezar's (2014) framework for considering change specifically in higher education environments. Like Hickman (2010), Kezar (2014) considered multiple elements related to change, not just change theories themselves, when developing a framework for understanding and leading change efforts. Kezar (2014) suggested that types of change, contexts of change, and leadership and agency are each part of framework for understanding how colleges and universities change.

Before describing her framework for understanding change in higher education, Kezar (2014) summarized six schools of thought or theories on change: (a) scientific management, (b) evolutionary, (c) social cognition, (d) cultural, (e) political, and (f) institutional. She explained that the theories can be used as analytical tools for understanding institution situations as well as for analyzing and determining which approach(es) for change to utilize. In exploring each of the six change theories, Kezar (2014) summarized key features and uses. Scientific management change types typically occur in a linear, planned process. Evolutionary theories to change assume that change is dependent on specific circumstances and the outside environment. Social cognition theories focus on the thought process of individuals and the role of learning and development. In cultural theories, the change process tends to be long term and slow and also tends to occur naturally. Political theories there is an assumption that two opposing or dialectical views exist and change occurs when with synthesis or reconciliation after a clash of ideals or values. Institutional theories consider how higher education

organizations may change in different ways from other organizations, why change might be difficult in long-standing institutions, and the process of unplanned change or drift.

Kezar (2014) considered the types of change as part of her framework for understanding how institutions of higher education change. First, she explained that the content of change is an important factor in analyzing to determine action. Content of change in higher education is what the change is about; possible contents of change in higher education are use of technology, multicultural initiatives, new funding formulas, etc. Second, the scope or degree of change should be considered. First-order changes are the more typical and process based changes. However, second-order changes require stakeholders to have more time for sense-making and processing. Other considerations related to types of change are levels of change (e.g., occurring with individuals, groups, the organization, multiple levels, etc.), the focus of the change, and the source of the change. Each of these considerations points to the type of change, which, in turn and considered in the context of type, may require actions that stem from multiple theories of change.

Context of change is the next element in Kezar's (2014) framework. Both internal and external contexts affect the change process; this means that both the situation and setting need to be considered when analyzing to enact change. Kezar (2014) identified four concentric levels of context in which institutions are encased. The broadest level requires the context of social, political, and economic factors. Leaders and other change agents on campus should remain aware of trends and changes that are social (e.g., public views on affordability), political (e.g., financial aid policy), and economic (e.g., recessions) factors that may impact colleges positively or negatively. Moving

inward, the next level of context is external stakeholders; foundations, accreditation agencies, discipline specific societies, government agencies, and potentially other relevant stakeholder groups can hinder, propel, or incite change. The next level is higher education sector as an institutional context; features such as shared governance, governing boards, and historic features of higher education should often be considered as part of the change context. At the core of the context is the institutional culture which includes features like institutional history and values. All levels of context should be considered as each could play a role within a particular change situation.

Like Hickman (2010), Kezar (2014) also considered leadership and agency as part of her framework for understanding how colleges and universities change. Kezar (2014) suggested that previous literature on organizational change has overemphasized the roles of individuals; she focuses on leadership as a group process. She did acknowledge strategies used by leaders who are in positions of power; this included: establishing core values, vision, or mission; using planning mechanisms; using resources and funding; motivating people through incentives and rewards; restructuring or creating support structures; and hiring and training employees. Strategies used in grassroots change efforts include: intellectual opportunities, professional development, leverage curricula and using classroom as forums, joining and utilizing existing networks, working with students, hiring like-minded people, gathering data, garnering resources, and partnering with influential external stakeholders.

Continuing to focus on leadership, Kezar (2014) emphasized that leadership is increasingly being considered a collective or group process rather than power exerted by an individual. However, both collective leadership and shared leadership require a focus

on skills that change agents may need to utilize (e.g., relationship skills, acknowledging and working with diverse perspectives, influence and motivation skills, empowerment, etc.).

These factors, type of change, context of change, and agency/leadership, are elements considered within the context of a framework for change at institutions of higher education (Kezar, 2014). These elements in addition to the consideration of change theories can allow change agents to analyze and enact change.

Summary of Review

In summary, the literature included in this review provided readers with an understanding of the historical development and current use of varying performance funding models, an overview of theoretical models and frameworks related to understanding student success, examples of empirical research addressing student success theories, and a summary of two current models for understanding organizational change and leadership.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Qualitative, multiple-case study procedures guided the exploration of organizational changes that relate to student success at four-year public institutions.

Creswell (2013) defined case study research as a:

...qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a *case*) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving *multiple sources of information* (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a *case description* and case *themes*. (p. 97)

One type of case study is the instrumental case study. Instrumental case studies are an effective approach to research because they allow the researcher to use one or more bounded systems (the cases) to illustrate a particular process, issue, or concern (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995).

Stake (1995) explained that researchers choose to use the case study approach because researchers can then highlight the “uniqueness and commonality” of each case (p. 1). Selecting multiple cases allows an investigator to maximize what she can learn about a given process, issue, or concern. Each case presents a unique narrative, but case commonalities also foster the maximization of knowledge learned. Stake (1995) explained that case studies seem to be “a poor basis for generalization” but continued to explain that case study could allow generalizations to be modified and refined (p. 7).

Thus, multiple case study as a method to research allows an investigator to gain an insight into a particular phenomenon.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore and describe the organizational changes that are occurring at small- to medium-sized, four-year public institutions during a transition into the use of performance accountability measures tied to state funding. The central research question was: *How is institutional change occurring at four-year public institutions to foster student success?* The following sub-questions were developed:

RQ1: How have institutions' missions and purposes, or the perceptions of these polices, changed or evolved in regards to student success?

RQ2: What environmental evidence exists that shows an institutional focus on student success efforts?

RQ3: How are structural and procedural changes occurring in decision-making, task orientation, and communication patterns for those involved in working toward student success?

RQ4: How do individuals working to implement institutional measures for student success assess the progress of their efforts?

Rationale for Using Qualitative Approach

Simply put, "we conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be *explored*" (Creswell, 2013, p. 47). Research topics may need to be explored when detailed information on complex issues in which context is important is needed to address the research questions. Since the purpose of this research study was to explore and

describe organizational change, a qualitative approach to the inquiry seemed most appropriate. A qualitative approach to this particular study also was beneficial because qualitative approaches allow the researcher to be immersed in the natural setting of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Being immersed in the natural settings for this project allowed me to see the campus settings and interact with participants within the context of their work settings.

Merriam (2009) suggested that qualitative researchers focus on “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their words, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). This study focused on how professionals within institutions are experiencing and interpreting the transition to the use of performance funding metrics, so this made a qualitative approach the most appropriate for this inquiry.

A case study approach was especially appropriate for this research study. Yin (2012) suggested that there are three ideal situations for using the case study approach: (a) when the research question is either descriptive or explanatory in nature, (b) when the phenomenon should be emphasized within its real-world context, and (c) when conducting an evaluation. The intent of this research study was not to serve as an evaluation of the use of performance-based funding at specific institutions, but the other ideal situations suggested a fit the study purpose. A qualitative, multiple case study approach allowed me to focus on gathering multiple perspectives within and between bounded systems (the institutions) to assist in highlighting the uniqueness of organizational change at some institutions as well as the commonalities of organizational change efforts for student success at institutions in states transitioning into the use of performance-based funding.

Researcher Reflexivity

Creswell (2013) stated, “Whether we are aware of it or not, we always bring certain beliefs and philosophical assumptions to our research” (p. 15). He also explained, “Qualitative researchers need to ‘position’ themselves in their writing” (p. 216). Since researchers themselves serve as the data collection instrument in qualitative studies, they must be aware of their own biases, values, and experiences and also have a duty to inform readers of their own positions within the context of the research project. Thus, understanding my experiences in education and interpretive framework assisted in presenting material to readers.

My own interest in performance funding and its effects on organizational change stems from my interest in education accountability measures. Prior to pursuing my doctorate in Educational Studies, I worked in both K-12 education and higher education settings. While working as a high school English teacher, accountability measures were frequently related to my duties. Standardized testing at various levels determined, to some degree, how the success of students and the school were measured by varying stakeholders. My students in my regular English classes took both district and state assessments in reading and writing. I also taught a credit recovery course that allowed students an alternate route to earning the English credits required for graduation and also allowed the school to work toward meeting graduation numbers for meeting Annual Yearly Progress.

After leaving the K-12 setting and moving into a position in higher education, my connection to accountability of student success did not go away. I took a position working with a scholarship learning community that focused on helping students develop

personally and academically. Many students in the program were minority, first-generation, and/or low-income students, groups of students often categorized as at-risk. Other staff members of the program and I worked to develop opportunities that facilitated student success in and out of the classroom. We often used research on student persistence and student success as well as best practices of the field in planning social, life skills, and academic programs and opportunities. During my time working for the program, an evaluation was commissioned to assess if the program was indeed completing its goals. Accountability was ever present – not only because of the evaluation but because the program itself was geared toward increasing student success.

My own interpretive framework was also an important consideration. I believe that “reality is co-constructed between the researcher and the researched and shaped by individual experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 36). I identify with the constructivist paradigm; I carry my own experiences with me but also value the context and perspectives provided by individuals (i.e., research participants) in research settings. Both the researcher and the research participants bring information to the table, and the knowledge provided by both is used to construct meaning or to facilitate interpretation of the findings. I believe that having a constructivist paradigm framework allows me to take in and interpret information from others within the context of a research problem.

Sample Selection

Two levels of sampling occur when utilizing the case study method (Merriam, 2009). The sampling process begins by selecting the cases using criterion sampling strategy, which is defined as occurring when all cases selected meet defined criteria (Creswell, 2013). Selected cases in this research project:

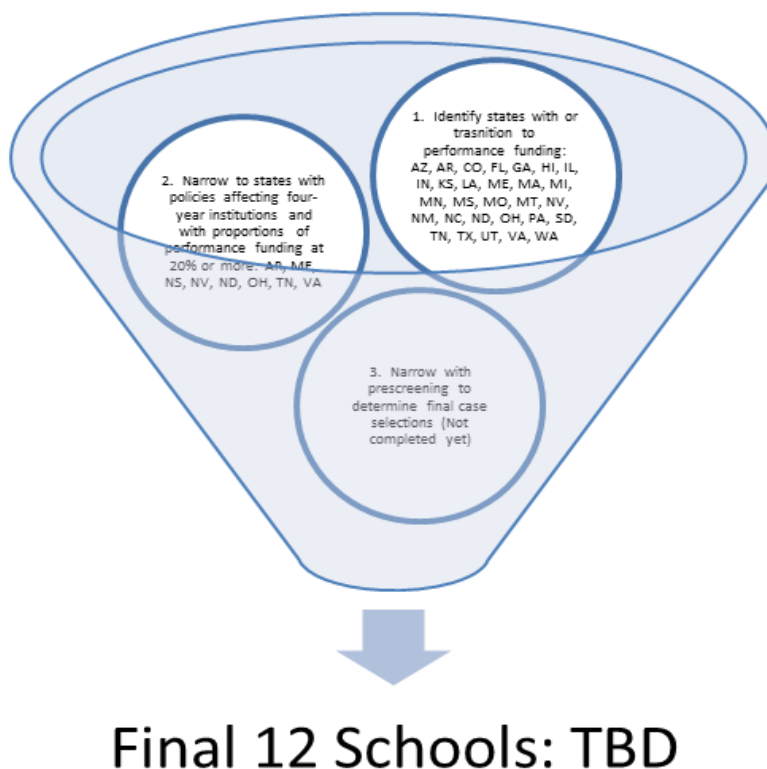
- were located in a state with 20% or more of state funding tied to performance metrics either at the time of the study or within the 1-3 years following the study,
- were small- or medium-sized public four-year institution, and
- showed evidence of institutional changes during an initial screening.

I had planned to select two institutions for participation from each of six states that met the state-level criteria: Ohio, Arkansas, Maine, Mississippi, North Dakota, and Virginia.

Figure 2 outlines the sample selection process.

Figure 2

Case Sample Selection Diagram



Although Nevada and Tennessee met the state-level criteria, institutions in both states were excluded prior to invitations. Nevada had very few potential case institutions and had only primarily nonresidential institutions. Although primarily nonresidential institutions from other states were included in this study, this was the only type of potential institution in Nevada making the initial goal of having two different institutions in each states impossible in Nevada. Although multiple institutions in Tennessee met the criteria, they were excluded because of the state's extensive history with performance-based funding and research on those institutions.

Although the initial plan for the first level of sampling had been to include a total of 12 institutions from six states, some institutions invited to participate declined to do so. Thus, the final institutions included after the first level of sampling represented both performance funding 1.0 and 2.0 policies, three states, and five institutions in total. The study included two institutions located in Maine (PF 2.0), one in Mississippi (PF 2.0), and two located in Virginia (PF 1.0). The five the institutions had missions that were strongly focused on teaching, and two of the included institutions had histories of serving populations that were historically underrepresented in higher education. These features added to the uniqueness of the cases included in the study.

The second level of sample selection occurred within each bounded case (Merriam, 2009). For this level, criterion and opportunistic strategies were used (Creswell, 2013). The student success coordinator (or institutional equivalent) was interviewed based on the criteria that he/she leads the institution's student success efforts. Focus group participants and other interviewees consisted of individuals who worked closely with the student success coordinator and other staff and faculty who also were

identified as having a role in student success. Although the initial intent of this study was to focus primarily on participants at mid-level and student facing positions within institutional hierarchies, some senior leadership were interviewed at three of the institutions because of the institutions' organizational structures and who was involved directly in student success efforts. In total, 10 focus groups and 26 individual interviews were conducted. Focus group participants included faculty and student-facing staff. Interview participants included student success coordinators (who varied in their hierarchical position within the university setting), institutional mid-level and senior leaders with key roles in student success initiatives, and faculty and student-facing staff who preferred an individual interview.

Data Collection

Case study was an ideal research method for this particular exploration because the method relies on multiple data sources to provide detailed descriptions. Creswell (2013) suggested collecting “documents and records, interviews, observation, and physical artifacts” (p. 149). For this research study, I planned to collect records from (a) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), (b) individual interviews, (c) focus group interviews, (d) observations, and (e) other campus artifacts to provide comprehensive analyses of cases.

Stake (1995) noted, “It is easy to become overwhelmed with the details,” highlighting the importance of planning ahead for the variety of interviews to be completed and documents and other data to be gathered over the course of the study (p. 54). To facilitate this organizing and planning process, additional details for each type of data to be collected for this multiple case study are included.

Interviews and Focus Groups

Interviews and focus groups were the primary sources of data for this study. Similar protocols guided the interviews and focus groups. The interview questions for the individual interviews were based on the theories and themes of organizational change from the theoretical framework for this study. Interviews were formally structured, beginning with a project description, reviewing the consent form, allowing time for participant questions, interview question responses from participants, and closing the interview. Member checking was completed by emailing the interviewee a copy of the transcript after the interview for review. Focus group interview questions were framed closely to those of the individual interviews. Focus groups followed the same procedural structure as the individual interviews with the exception that member checking was completed immediately following the interview by me orally reviewing my notes on participant responses. Interview protocols are included in Appendix A; focus group protocols are included in Appendix B.

Observations

During campus visits, I had planned to observe staff meetings. However, because participant scheduling for interviews and focus groups, which were used as the primary source of data, I was unable to attend any meetings on student success. Since this was not possible, staff, faculty, and leadership who served on these committees for student success were included as either interviewees or focus group participants..

Documents and Artifacts

For each case, I incorporated campus websites and publicly available flyers/handouts related to student success efforts in the analysis. During campus visits, I

took photographs to assist in recording the context of setting. Publicly-available institutional data on IPEDS, including demographic information and retention and completion rates, were used in writing institutional profiles.

Reflective Journal

I maintained field notes and a reflective journal throughout the data collection process. The journal allowed me to develop a sense of emerging themes by allowing me to keep a record of immediate interpretations and thoughts about interviews, focus groups, and collected documents and artifacts.

Data Management

Interviews and focus groups were recorded on a digital audio recording device and then uploaded to my computer. Interviews and focus groups were then transcribed. All data were stored on a password protected computer.

Data Analysis

Multiple-case studies have “two stages of analysis – the within-case analysis and the cross-case analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 204). The within-case analysis led to the descriptions of each case studied to provide readers with “portraits” of each institution, and the cross-case analysis provided themes, which are the “core element” of qualitative research (Creswell, 2012, pp. 247-248).

Once data were transcribed and organized, the process of coding, “aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information,” began (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). I read the transcripts multiple times to get a sense of the emerging themes. Then I uploaded all transcripts to a data management system, MaxQDA, for more detailed

analysis. I read the transcripts again. Using the software, I organized the data first into codes and then into categories.

After the coding or pulling apart phase, code words were put back together into categories or themes (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Themes are “broad unites of information that consists of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (Creswell, 2013, p. 186). These themes as well as their sub-themes can then be abstracted to allow for data interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

Although all researchers have ethical considerations to make while conducting their work, Guba and Lincoln (1981, cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 52) suggested that ethical concerns may be unique when considering the case study approach. Merriam (2009) posited that all qualitative research is limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator. Within the case study method specifically, findings could be skewed because of choices that the researcher makes when selecting which of the available data to report. Beyond the reporting of findings, Creswell (2013) suggested that ethical issues can arise at any point within the qualitative research process – from the planning of the study to the publishing of the report. In order to be cognizant of ethical issues, Creswell suggested that researchers consider the different phases of the research process and the types of ethical concerns that may arise and how they could be avoided.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has specific requirements prior to conducting research that aid the researcher in considering the ethics of their investigation. I had already completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training, one of UNL’s requirements for conducting research in the social sciences prior to the

proposal of this research project. Maintaining CITI certification is a requirement for obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the second required step related to ethics in the research planning process. Once my advisory committee approved my research proposal, I completed and submitted the required IRB form; the IRB approval letter for this project is included in Appendix C. In addition, each of the five participating institutions required that their IRB forms be completed and policies be adhered to; I complied with all of these ethical expectations.

Consideration of ethics can be found in the interview and focus group protocols. Participants had the research purpose explained and were given the choice of consenting to participate in the study. Informed consent forms were collected from each participant. Informed consent documents are included in Appendixes D and E. All participants were given a copy of the informed consent form which includes information on contacting me, my dissertation committee chair, and the UNL IRB office. Participants were encouraged to ask questions and were allowed stop their participation at any point during the research process.

In order to ensure privacy of the participants and institutions, all data collected have remained stored in a password protected computer or in a locked file cabinet. All participants and institutions were assigned pseudonyms, and names were kept anonymous. Personally identifying characteristics of participants were not used or reported in the research. Similarly, identifying institution information was not used or reported in the research.

Chapter 4

Within-Case Findings

When considering how to write case study findings, Merriam (1988) remarked that “there is no standard format for reporting such data” (p. 185). However, findings should be reported in a way that allows readers to: (a) have a clear picture of the cases included in the study, (b) an understanding of the overall lessons or themes from the project, and (c) a clear representation of findings as they relate to the research questions (Creswell, 2013). In order to ensure that readers have a vivid picture of each of the five institutions included in this multiple-case study, I focused on the within-case analysis by providing institutional portraits that address each of the five institution’s: (a) general characteristics, (b) the change processes occurring within them, (c) efforts occurring for student success, and (d) other features as they relate to efforts for student success during a transition period to the use of state performance funding metrics. In the chapter that follows (chapter 5), I then address the cross-case analysis by providing readers with the themes common to the five cases.

Because the purpose of this research study was to consider the efforts and change for student success at four-year institutions receiving performance-based funding, each of the five institutions was a public institution. Since many of the performance metrics within the states focus on student progress and outcomes, I chose to only consider small- or medium-sized institutions that had a significant focus on teaching. Although research was occurring within the institutions, the main focus or mission of each related to the purpose of teaching students. The fact that two of the institutions included in this study had histories of serving populations that had historically been underrepresented in higher

education further highlights the focal point of this study being on institutions that had missions related to the success of students. Although a detailed description of each institution is included in this chapter, Table 1 provides snapshot of the five institutions included in the study. Institutions are listed by pseudonyms that I created.

Table 1

Case Institutions Snapshot

Institution	Approx. Enrollment	Mission Features	Students
Commitment University	9,000	Teaching and learning State needs Some research	Majority traditional Career focus (“working class” students)
Individual Students University	2,500	Teaching and learning Historic commitment to underserved population Some research	Large minority population Large non-traditional population
Student Focus University	5,000	Focus all ages of students Online and site-based education	Majority non-traditional Mostly part-time
University of Community Achievement	10,000	Teaching and research Community involvement	Mostly traditional Many part-time
University of Transformation	6,000	Teaching and research Historic commitment to underserved population	Majority minority Mostly full-time, traditional students

Commitment University

Commitment University (CU) is a medium, four-year university that offers baccalaureate and postbaccalaureate degrees. According to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (n.d.), CU is a primarily residential university and has an enrollment around 9,000. Of the five institutions in this study, CU could be characterized as the most traditional in regards to its student population and residential status. CU’s profile on the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) website indicates that nearly

all undergraduates are attending full-time and are 24-years-old or younger. Although faculty research is acknowledged, research is only seen as a priority because of its links to quality teaching and learning at CU. A greater priority is placed on the campus community, culture, and environment. Students and their success are positioned as a main concern of administration, staff, and faculty. CU's website highlights the institution's focus on the engaging student life on campus and the strong relationships students form with peers, faculty, and staff.

This profile constructed of Commitment University (CU) through online documents is consistent with my perceptions of CU during the campus visit that was part of the research study. When driving down the highway to visit CU, I noticed that everything was green. I had seen pictures of the campus, the small city where it is located, and the surrounding area prior to my visit. However, I was still struck by the scenic drive. While touring campus, I continued to be impressed by the scenery. The campus was a mixture of green space, trees, and buildings that appeared fresh and new. Students could be found in all the nooks of the campus – in the coffee shop, in the cafeteria, walking between buildings with each other as well as with staff and faculty, visiting administrative buildings, and (when it wasn't raining) having lively conversations outside. What struck me while walking around the campus was the level of engagement among individuals. Students said "hello" to peers in the cafeteria and fluttered between tables to engage with multiple individuals. Students, faculty, and staff made eye-contact with me and with each other when walking around campus. Between interviews and focus groups, I came across staff and faculty with whom I had already met as part of my visit, and each acknowledged me with a warm smile and nod. Students,

staff, and faculty not included as participants in this study also gave friendly acknowledgements or offered suggestions for how to get from one building to the next.

Commitment University (CU) staff and faculty who participated in this research study confirmed the value the campus community placed on relationships. Several participants admitted that many of the students they interacted with had indicated that CU was not their first, and often times not even their second, choice to attend. However, these participants went on to explain, that once students started their freshmen year at CU, they realized not only the value of the university but, according to one focus group participant, saw it as an institution where they could “learn their potential” because it was a “great place.” Another focus group participant explained that “when they [students] leave [graduate], they feel that sense of pride and confidence.”

One institutional academic leader, Lesley Hall, explained the importance of the campus environment for students who may not have initially been interested in Commitment University:

When they [students] come to campus... they weren't really interested in [Commitment University] until they came to campus. And I don't know if you've noticed, but there's really a friendly kind of atmosphere here, too. It's not the arrogant... feeling that you get on some campuses, like, you know, I don't really fit in. I think you do feel at home [at CU]. And you see the beautiful new buildings, how well everything is maintained. I noticed that when I came here to interview... People take a real pride in this campus and take care of things.

Not only is the campus cared for, but participants indicated a strong sense of care for students from both staff and faculty.

Several interview and focus group participants pointed to the importance of understanding who their students were. Information available online indicated that most of the students at Commitment University (CU) were traditional college-aged students from within the region. This is true. However, participants expounded on this by explaining the growing demographics within this population of students. One participant noted the large portion of first-generation students served at this campus. Another acknowledged the growing minority population. Another focus group participant acknowledged that “it’s not the best definition” but that CU was a “working class school.” The participant and other members of the same focus group continued to explain that there is value in CU because it serves a role in educating the citizens of the area and helping those individuals to find their own successes in life as productive members of their communities.

One of the leaders at Commitment University (CU), Miles Harrison, explained that the images on their admissions brochure “is not the only pretty building [or] the only smiling face on campus.” Harrison described CU as a university that provides “challenge and support” and believed his role and that of his staff was being part of the “support mechanism.” He admitted that they have a “beautiful campus” where “you’ll find friendships” but also acknowledged that, within the state, CU has had a longstanding role of helping students attain success. Another leader at CU, Kent Robinson, expounded on this role of CU; he noted that they have “a moral and ethical commitment to the students that [they] admit.” Robinson elaborated his point:

We know who they [the students] are; we know what they're like; we know a lot about their shortcomings, and we feel obligated to give them the best chance at success that we possibly can. And that's why you see what we've done so far.

Participants acknowledged this longstanding focus on students and their success, however success could be individually interpreted by individual students, and noted that the efforts they were currently undergoing during a shift to the state use of performance metrics for funding would likely have occurred regardless of the new policy. As Jim Grey explained:

I like to believe that we've been doing that [focusing on student success] before there was the increased emphasis on the metrics, on graduation rates, and retention rates... I think we've always seen that as being our mission, and now what's happened is we just have increased emphasis or impetus to do that.

The increased focus on student success efforts as they relate to state performance metrics can be seen in some of the new campus initiatives for improved campus performance.

Like other universities included in this study, Commitment University (CU) has used this increased focus on student success metrics as defined by their state to consider the processes for student success and the current data related to student success in more depth. Some of the institutional efforts for student success include: (a) the use of an outside consulting group to gather, analyze, and use relevant data; (b) the addition of new staff positions for retention and graduation efforts; and (c) a renewed focus on existing programs and practices for student success.

The use of the consulting group and the committee meetings and conversations that are occurring as part of the process of using a consultant are providing focus for some of the campus initiatives. One focus group participant explained:

I think probably the [consulting firm name] stuff and some of the other retention efforts that we're really focused on right now [are] gathering research, developing a plan, and trying to execute that. I think it's... dependent on the upper level administration, and I think it's dependent on the budget.

The guiding factors of research, planning, and managing changes within a budget have lead the Commitment University (CU) to consider student data when planning new programs or continuing to use existing programs.

Commitment University (CU) has had a long history of using an orientation program for incoming freshmen as well as a history of using a first-year experience course. Participants indicated that these practices would continue; however, both have experienced continued restructuring over the years. For example, as faculty and staff are working to have more targeted efforts, the first-year experience course has been shifted to allow for special sections based on student major. Lesley Hall explained the benefit of this practice:

[First-year Experience Class Name] covers... basically... [the] same topics. You know, study skills, getting involved on campus, get to know each other, get to know a faculty member and a peer instructor. But, when you have a group... like pre-nursing... we really have to focus on study skills and time management because they have to do well. How do you

study in a science class? ... We also make them interview a professional... [to] see if they're still interested [in nursing] by the time we get to that point [end of the course].

Similar to tying students' major course work to an early college experience, CU has also worked to tie difficult course work to learning community experiences, especially for courses that have previously had higher DFW rates (rates of student grades being D, F, or Withdrawal).

Besides working to provide early experiences that tie academics to co-curricular experiences, Commitment University's (CU) student success efforts during a state transition to the use of performance metrics have also increased the focus on different student pathways to success. Many participants discussed the pathways for at-risk student groups. The student tutoring center has tried to increase use by discussing partnership with residence life to have tutoring services in residence hall lounges, and the tutoring center has already partnered with an outside service that provides online tutoring services so students can more conveniently get assistance. In addition, some participants expressed concern about the old midterm grade policy in which not all students were getting early feedback on course progress; shortly before my visit, CU's faculty senate had voted to change the student handbook to require feedback be given to first-year and at-risk students. In addition, for students who do slip academically, CU has a recently revised suspension policy that allows for students who have been placed on probation to enroll in a course to enhance academic skills.

Commitment University (CU) has also taken a look at pathways for other students. Some of this consideration has been made possible by the creation of a new

retention staff position. Data had shown that not only were students who were struggling leaving the institution, but students on the upper end were also departing. In response, CU began offering undergraduate research opportunities for advanced students. In addition, CU reorganized their career services offerings by integrating career services staff and functions into the university's colleges.

Individual Students University

Individuals Students University (ISU) is a small, four-year institution that offers undergraduate professional and arts and sciences degrees as well as some postbaccalaureate degrees. According to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (n.d.), ISU has an enrollment around 2,500 students in a primarily residential environment. ISU's website emphasizes the institution's history in educating an historically underserved population, women. Although the institution has been serving women as well as men for over 30 years, the institution's focus on diversity and serving populations that have been historically underrepresented continues. Institutional documents indicated a continued high population of women students as well as a high population of students that are considered racial minorities. In addition, ISU's website touts the institution's high focus on students as individuals and smaller class sizes. ISU's commitment to the state, region, and individual students is supplemented, although definitely not overshadowed by, a value of having faculty engaged in research.

My visit to Individual Students University (ISU) confirmed the profile created using online information. ISU's campus was nestled near the center of its host city, a smaller city in the Southeast. Physically, the campus was constructed in a neatly built square formation with gates allowing entrance around the perimeter. The main gate was

staffed. Once on campus, the neat and clean feel continued. I visited the campus in the spring, and the scent of flowers greeted visitors stepping out of their vehicles. ISU maintenance staff could be seen mowing lawns and attending to the overall campus aesthetics. The grounds as well as the historic buildings looked pristine. Campus students, staff, and faculty were as inviting as the facilities. In addition to being welcomed by the smell of spring, I was greeted by smiles and head nods from campus inhabitants. Walking between buildings allowed me to experience this environment with both the sticky heat of the sun as well as the pouring warm rain showers. Each building I visited had a historic feel. Readers should imagine columns outside of the buildings, gazebos between buildings, the sound of clicking feet on wood floors, and décor of Southern greeting rooms complete with period furniture outside of many administrative offices.

Individual Student University (ISU) staff and faculty who participated in this research study confirmed the value the campus community placed on history as well as relationships. A focus group participant explained:

We are an institution that was founded to serve underserved populations, which was for women..., and now we continue that tradition, serving minority students, students of a non-traditional age. We are a small institution. We focus on a personalized learning environment.

An institutional leader, John Lipsky, expounded, “We are a small university, and I’ve heard people say we function like a small private, but really our student population looks more like that of a community college,” adding to the notion that the school serves underserved populations with a personal approach. Another institution leader, Mike

Roberts, explained that ISU was a university with faculty and staff that “bends over backwards to make sure students are successful.”

The already existing culture of student success at Individual Student University (ISU) allowed for several transitions to take place as the institution prepared for the state use of performance-based funding. A faculty member who was a focus group participant explained:

The biggest one [initiative] that’s happened in the last two years is..., knowing that the shift to performance metrics was coming, one of the things that the institution – and this was administrative... they put the resources behind it [initiative development], and they hired an educational consulting firm to look at our institutional data.

The participant continued to explain that the first phase in working with the consulting firm was addressing the admissions practices and that the second phase “has been focusing on retaining and graduating students” – issues that are directly linked to state performance metrics.

In progressing through this transition phase, Individual Student University (ISU) has initiated policy changes considering student needs, reorganized offices designed to serve students, and hired new staff with roles directly related to institutional goals. In regards to policies, ISU has continued to have students on academic probation enroll in a skills-based course for assistance and also continued to have students entering from high school with lower standardized test scores enroll in a skills class. Another option for students enrolling with lower test scores from high school was to enroll in a reading

course linked to a for-credit course to help students in remedial classes make progress toward a degree.

An institutional leader at Individual Student University (ISU) discussed other policy changes. Lonna Wilcox explained that ISU had a “longstanding practice that now sounds absolutely ridiculous” that students who had not met all admissions requirements could not declare a major. She acknowledged that this policy left at-risk students at more of a risk because they were “not being able to affiliate themselves with [a] college,” which made them less invested in university life. In addition, Wilcox explained that ISU used to have a policy that would “not allow anyone with a balance [on their student account] to register.” She explained that this policy was adjusted to allow students who have a balance of less than \$500 to register and then pay their balance prior to the start of class; this new policy allowed for more flexibility with students who may need to work over breaks to pay student bills.

As the focus on student success grows, some staff members have experienced reorganizations in their duty functions. In a staff focus group, participants explained that in the past, their jobs had involved multiple elements of student success, so some participants were teaching success and skills-based courses, collecting early alert data, working with at-risk students, and other related tasks. Individual Student University (ISU) leaders made the decision to redesign their office for student success to allow for increased staff and more specialized roles. In addition, staff that had previously reported to other offices but had functions that aligned with the purpose of the student success office were shifted to be located in the same building. The new director of this office is also working to collaborate with other offices and departments to infuse other best

practices; for example, ISU, under this director's guidance, will be investing in the use of supplemental instruction targeted at courses with high DFW rates.

One of the new positions that was created was a position that has dual reporting lines – to the student success office as well as to individual college deans. The job description for this newly created position has specific expectations for the degree to which these individuals must raise retention and graduation rates within their assigned colleges. These individuals function like advisors for first-year students. Students are later assigned to faculty advisors. Institutional leaders believe that, by providing additional support to help students develop a pathway for success in their first year of college, students will be retained and ultimately graduate. In addition, these staff members target at-risk students within their assigned colleges and collaborate with faculty to focus on student success. Although this role is new, these staff members plan to begin building online relationships with students prior to orientation to help students transition to college, assisting with orientation events, and teaching an entry year course for at-risk students.

In addition to the purposeful creation of new positions to more directly target efforts for student success, institutional leaders also are making new-hires for other positions at Individual Student University (ISU) more purposefully tied to student success efforts. For example, Mike Roberts described the following:

We're hiring a new housing director. Part of that interview process was about learning communities. That would not have been part of the conversation before performance funding. It probably would have been about financial management skills in the auxiliary. But learning

communities was an equal discussion in the interview process, so we continue to get smarter.

New hires are also being considered as they relate to the faculty role at the university. For example, Individual Student University (ISU) is in the process of hiring a director for a center that focuses on best teaching practices. A faculty member who participated in a focus group expressed positive comments about this new opportunity. She explained:

I'm hoping this [filling of the director position] comes to fruition... I kind of like being part of that environment where we learn from each other – what works, what doesn't work, bring in some best practices, what can I do to make my teaching better to help these students succeed, be it online or face-to-face. So, I'm cautiously optimistic.

Other faculty members also expressed optimism for this renewed focus on teaching at ISU. Although prefaced with a need for professional development, another faculty member commented, “Especially in the last year, things have aligned really well. There is a big push towards more active learning approaches in all of the classes from what I can tell.”

Student Focus University

Student Focus University (SFU) is a small, four-year university that offers baccalaureate degrees as well as select associate degrees. According to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (n.d.), SFU has an enrollment around 5,000. In addition, SFU's profile on the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) website indicates that special opportunities available at this institution include ROTC,

teacher certification, study abroad, and distance education opportunities. These opportunities have direct links to institutional data available on SFU's website that highlights a mission focused on serving both traditional and non-traditional students as well as place-bound students. A major facet of the institution's student body that is highlighted on several institutional documents and artifacts is the institution's history of focusing on adult learners, who constitute a majority of the enrollment at SFU and are cited as often juggling seeking an education with work and family obligations. Many students attend SFU on a part-time basis. In summary, information available about SFU on national higher education databases and information from the SFU's website created a picture of an institution focused on serving a population of varied ages and in varied modalities.

This profile was consistent with my perceptions of the Student Focus University (SFU) during my campus visit that was part of the research study. When driving onto the campus, I noticed a lack of any type of residence halls or other campus housing facilities. At the time of my visit, students were on break. However, parking facilities seemed abundant and located near the administrative offices, classes, student union and services faculties, and the library. The layout seemed typical of a small commuter campus with buildings centrally located on the ground surrounded by larger parking lots. This was fortunate for me, as the weather was cold and snowy and necessitated brisk walks between the campuses buildings.

When touring campus facilities, the feel of a commuter campus continued to a degree. The campus had the traditional facilities (a library, a cafeteria, conference rooms, classrooms, etc.), but a series of rooms filled with equipment for distance learning was

also observed. Certain rooms appeared more like a film studio than school rooms. I observed professional video cameras, green screens, and other equipment used to create synchronous and asynchronous learning experiences for students at a distance from the actual campus. I learned that some classes are broadcast live for synchronous distance learning, but that many other courses are offered in an asynchronous format to meet the busy schedules of the Student Focus University's (SFU) student population. The typical student at SFU was noted to be female, in her 30's, working while going to college, and also having family obligations.

Participants' descriptions of their roles in students' lives echoed a focus on that student population. When describing the mission and purpose of his institution, Brian Green, a leader within the institution, explained the following:

We're a four year baccalaureate mission. We also do select associate degrees... Of the seven publics [within the state], we are probably the open access institution... We do what we call responsible admissions, but many of our students... test into developmental courses.

Green further described the student population at Student Focus University: "They're working. They've got kids. You know, if their car breaks down, that's it... Their resiliency is challenged only just because of the world they live in... There [are] so many pressures on students."

Focus group participants at Student Focus University (SFU) echoed these comments by noting that they work to serve both traditional and nontraditional students' individual needs. One focus group participant explained that being aware of the limited time that adult students had available to be physically on campus was important for her to

know. She explained a need for staff to understand that adult learners may only be able to come to campus twice a week and that time spent completing tasks was valuable to them. Another focus group participant observed that both staff and faculty were cognizant of the student population and worked to be flexible with students' special needs as a result of their outside obligations. Focus group and interview participants explained that often times other communication modalities – phone calls, emails, social media, etc. – were used not only to facilitate classes but also to communicate with students about navigating the university system (e.g., to facilitate registration, for tutoring services, etc.).

In comparison to the other institutions included in this study, Student Focus University's (SFU) approach to the new state performance-based funding policy was different. Brian Green discussed the relationship between his state's performance metrics and the SFU's role:

There is background; we get points for the number of graduates, we get points in terms of transfer students, we get points for... non-traditionals, students who are coming back to school... Our average student here is about 33-years old, female, most of them have a child and work... That's who we are, so the outcomes based funding is probably pretty aligned with us because... a third of our students come from community colleges... So, a lot of this stuff seems to be aligning with what our mission is.

Because of this natural alignment, Green offered that SFU does not have a "war room" but instead is focused on continued institutional improvement.

Student Focused University (SFU) focus group members explained that one targeted improvement that reflected a focus on the students was the reorganization of some services for students through the creation of an advanced one-stop shop. One participant described this model:

That enrollment services umbrella is referred to as the [name of program on campus], and that's what we've adopted, where admissions and advising and other enrollment services kind of... are under one umbrella so that the student can have quick access to anything they need.

Another focus group member added that this type of model allowed for overlaps into other areas on campus and produces almost "cross-training between departments" so that staff on campus are familiar with what roles other staff members are facilitating. Another effort related to reorganization is a repurposing of SFU's library by incorporating writing and math tutoring services into the facility.

Other changes at Student Focus University (SFU) have similar intents in making practices more efficient and student friendly. Some of these types of initiatives have included the development of an institutional research office to assist with the gathering and analysis of data for decision-making. For example, an institutional leader recently provided departments with information regarding courses with high DFW (student grades of D, F, or Withdrawal) rates. Individual department faculty and staff were then tasked with designing tailored plans to address this information. Another initiative being created with the intent to improve efficiency relates to communication within online courses. SFU plans to have embedded stewards in certain online classes to facilitate

communication between the university and students. Brian Green used the following analogy to describe the plan:

I keep thinking about it [the initiative] like... an airport. It's one thing to say your flight's delayed; it's another thing to have information about... how long it's going to be. Basically [the initiative is] trying to speed the communication... If it's [the student concern] something about "I can't find my homework assignment in [the online platform]" or "I don't know how to submit" or all these questions that faculty get bogged down in... we have a person who's trained to be that rapid communicator back.

Thus, communications efforts are being introduced that will assist in facilitating student navigation of the university.

In addition to these efficiency efforts, leaders acknowledged the utilization of more targeted recruitment strategies. For example, Ava Miller, a leader at Student Focused University (SFU), explained, "I'd say we're definitely putting more recruiting efforts directly into transfers." She also acknowledged more efforts to gain students in STEM fields. For example, SFU expanded their veterinary technician program from an associate to a baccalaureate degree, added a cybersecurity program (which is in collaboration with their sister institutions), and collaborated with a private flight school to start an aviation program. Recruitment efforts have been targeted to this program as well. Miller expounded, "For example, with the aviation [program], it's an open hanger event, not an open house... They are actually going to be looking at the planes... So they're literally going up in a plane with an instructor."

One facet that is of note in Ava Miller's targeted areas of growth is the element of collaboration. The targeted recruitment of community college students has required increased contact and collaboration with community college staff. In addition, the development of new STEM programs has been facilitated by "organically" grown collaborations with other entities, either other higher education institutions or private organizations.

University of Community Achievement

University of Community Achievement (UCA) is a medium, four-year university that offers baccalaureate degrees and some graduate programs. According to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (n.d.), UCA is a selective, primarily nonresidential, high undergraduate institution with an enrollment around 10,000. UCA's website highlights the institution's focus on providing a high-quality experience through opportunities such as community involvement and service, engagement in and out of the classroom, and interactions with faculty who are engaged in research. The university's ties to the community are highlighted in several formats on various documents including mention of corporate and non-profit partnerships designed to benefit partners, students, and faculty. Although campus documents acknowledge a state and regional role, web materials and physical artifacts demonstrate an additional focus to national and global scholarships and service. In regards to website information and physical artifacts focused on student success, information was available on issues related to academic advising, orientation experiences, first-year learning experiences, academic resources for support, and technical information for navigating university life at UCA.

This profile constructed of the University of Community Achievement (UCA) through online and physical documents and artifacts is consistent with my perceptions of UCA during my campus visit. On the morning of the first day of my visit, I used an electronic navigation system to find the exact location of the building my first meeting. Upon arriving to the campus, I was provided with directions for parking that would be available during the campus visit. While walking around the campus, I developed a sense that this was a traditional undergraduate university. Students could be seen studying, walking between buildings, and buying cups of coffee at a café located in one of the academic buildings. This branch of the campus was located in a more urban setting and had a commuter student feel, but a free shuttle was available for students commuting between this branch and the residential campus branch of the university. While touring some of the campus buildings, I observed information on bulletin boards about studying abroad and about ways to be engaged in academic success. Campus documents invited students to become more engaged with co-curricular opportunities that could enhance their undergraduate experience.

University of Community Achievement (UCA) staff and faculty who participated in this research study expounded on this campus profile. When asked about the role and mission of her institution, Sophia Van Dorn, a leader within UCA, described that the “mission is to education students and to assist in the surrounding community – to make the world better.” She acknowledged, “I know it sounds really kind of corny, but that’s exactly what it is.” Other interview participants as well as focus group participants corroborated this link between focusing on students and the community. Some noted the importance of service learning opportunities for students and non-profit partners. Others

focused on the need for real-world experiences that could be gained for students by collaborating with business partners in the surrounding area. Still others saw value in having the university connected with local high schools to build a link that could foster successful high school to college transitions. The common thread between the comments of participants was on the link between student engagement and community involvement. One focus group participant expounded on this:

I think we're all excited about the eventual... results of [institutional initiative being] more hands-on learning. I know I work with more traditional aged students, and I think learning-style wise, it's to help get them engaged and help them stay here... Having a sort of theory in a classroom and being able to practice that or connect and network with people in the community is exciting... It's helping students to explore the theory of real life. I think they learn better that way.

Several participants focused on helping students advance. Sophia Van Dorn commented, "I always look at it [a model for decisions] as if we keep the students in the center. Then, whatever decision we make, we're making it for the right reason because we keep the students in the center." However, despite this consensus of care and concern for student progress, faculty and staff also expressed that other institutional issues were, to some degree, overshadowing the efforts of transition to build on student success initiatives. For example, multiple participants indicated that the University of Community Achievement (UCA) had been experiencing budget cuts as well as a series of leadership changes over the

several years leading up to the new state policy. One mid-level leader, Rita Murphy, at UCA commented:

Frankly, it would be very hard for me to provide any specific examples of how that [efforts for student success as a result of the new state funding policy] is being implemented because of the issues around the budget shortfall for this institution. The change in senior leadership added significant levels, and, frankly, I think the level of organizational distraction around the budget deficit has essentially taken everything off the table.

Other participants expressed confusion about who would be leading what types of initiatives and if certain initiatives would be sustained once more changes in senior leadership were made.

However, a faculty member, Alan Grouper, did explain that despite the “negative changes” coming from the senior administrative level, University of Community Achievement (UCA) staff members “have worked on initiatives to try to make a positive change occur.” Because of the “distracting” issues at the top of the institutional hierarchy, most of the changes and efforts for student success have occurred at the mid-level administration and “boots on the ground” staff and faculty levels.

One effort that was piloted and is being championed by a mid-level campus leader at the University of Community Achievement (UCA) is a dual advising model. Sophia Van Dorn explained, “I think anything that aligns professional advisors with faculty advising... as a partnership is a good thing for students.” The dual model would link students with both a faculty advisor and a professional advisor. Van Dorn explained the

different roles of the two advisors, “The faculty role will hopefully be more mentoring, and then the professional advisors will be more teaching, integrating students into the culture, the ecology of the institution so that they become a living community member.” Multiple focus group participants described the use of this advising model as it has been piloted as beneficial and productive. However, they also expressed uncertainty about the future of this initiative as leadership that would oversee its coordination is changing.

In addition, another initiative that affects the roles of both faculty and staff is a push for more community engagement. Faculty and staff are being encouraged to build collaborations with private businesses and non-profits in the area to increase learning opportunities for students. A faculty member, Alan Grouper, acknowledged that he has already “bought in” as he had already been working to build university collaborations for student experiences in his own classes. A focus group participant explained that “having sort of the theory in a classroom and being able to practice that or connect and network with people in the community is exciting.”

An initiative being run by an institutional leader through grant funding is the utilization of an outside resource to build in a more student characteristic-based assessment program. This outside resources is being used in first-year experience courses, residence life, and also by some other university personnel. A focus group participant explained that through the use of this program, the “campus is beginning to develop a common language, and I think it’s drawing people together to talk about student success.” This participant also acknowledged this type of initiative as being “grassroots” because it was coming from a faculty grant rather than being directed from administration. This type of program allowed for conversations about student success

and its facilitation to occur at the staff-faculty level rather than it being an administrative conversation.

University of Transformation

University of Transformation (UT) is a medium four-year university that offers undergraduate and graduate, including doctoral, experiences. Of the five institutions included in this study, it had the highest focus on institutional research and graduate programs. However, according to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (n.d.), UT still has a high undergraduate enrollment profile. UT's website emphasizes the institution's focus on being student-centered and valuing diversity in addition to recognizing its history as a historically Black university. Online documents indicate that a majority of students at UT today are African American, and a high proportion of UT's undergraduate students qualify for financial aid. In addition, UT's website touts the university's focus on science and research.

My navigation system identified that the shortest route to the University of Transformation (UT) was through a path that included a series of freeway interchanges. I did not feel isolated on my drive to campus as I was accompanied by moderate traffic; although, it was heavier during rush-hour periods as I commuted to campus during my stay in the city. UT is located in an urban setting. When I arrived to the main campus entrance, I was redirected to parking services to obtain the appropriate paperwork to be allowed permission to park on the campus. Once on foot, I observed evidence of several construction projects. A few buildings appeared newly constructed, landscaping was still being completed at one building site, and orange signs and barriers indicated a soon-to-be construction site of yet another new building. Campus was growing. A feeling of

newness and freshness greeted me and the other campus inhabitants. Campus inhabitants appeared focused; they were walking between buildings with a purpose, although almost all still took a second to smile at me and other passersby with a friendly acknowledgement. When I walked into buildings, I noticed a distinctly different feeling in the older buildings as compared to the new. Although old and new alike had furnishings that showed a focus on students, the newer buildings had a more open-concept feeling that invited gatherings and conversations. The new building smell seemed even more fresh with the sounds of continued construction that could be heard from outside.

The University of Transformation's (UT) staff and faculty who participated in this research study also indicated a focus to the future – of the students and the university itself. This focus is driven by a culture attentive to the success of students. One campus mid-level administrative leader, Sarah Greenburg, described UT's environment:

I'm going to be honest with you, it's still a very nurturing environment. It really is. And I don't know if that has anything to do with the size or the culture..., but I know that it's a nurturing environment, and everybody gets involved.

Greenburg elaborated on this idea of a campus community by explaining:

Everybody who works here, they don't just know your name, they know your story. It is really important with the type of student [here] that we work with, be it an adult, be it first generation, be it a rich kid, be it an African American person, be it a non-African American person, a student who's transferring to us or came to us as a freshmen. One commonality

I... see in all of them, they all have their own story. And if you know them, then... that means that “I matter to you” and “I’m trusting that you’re going to see me through this process.”

Other participants echoed this idea of a campus culture that was focused on serving individual students. When mentioning the role of those involved in a newly redesigned office that focuses on retention and completion, a staff member in a focus group commented:

I think that’s why the students keep returning, because when we, each of us has our own different personalities and different styles, and so there’s someone in here who can relate [to] each student that comes in that door. No matter how old or how young, no matter... what their likes and dislikes... there’s somebody who can connect with them... they find... that we’re not all robots. When they come in and they see that they can connect with someone in here that makes them feel comfortable.

The focus group participant later added, “We try to individualize the situation.”

This focus on student success has prompted restructuring of offices whose functions relate to retention and completion rates as well as a revamping of physical campus spaces. However, as research participants from the University of Transformation (UT) noted, these changes may not all be linked to the new state-level performance-based funding. Some other contributing factors to the changes have included (a) federal accountability measures and (b) internal institution issues. For example, one focus group participant explained, “One of the reasons we’re doing so [many] initiatives and programs... especially targeting the freshmen and sophomore students is because of the

new regulations, both federal and state regulations as far as financial aid is concerned.”

The participant continued to explain that a large number of students at UT receive federal aid because the institution has high populations of students who are low-income, minority, and/or first-generation. Some types of programming that directly link to these types of financial aid accountability measures are workshops in first-year experience courses about personal budgeting and planning for the use of student grants and loans.

In addition to a consideration of both federal and state accountability measures, participants at the University of Transformation (UT) also acknowledged other issues that were prompting changes at their campus: an enrollment shortfall as well as accreditation issues. However, participants explained that these issues added further impetus to making changes that would lead to greater levels of student success in regards to retention rates and degree completion rates. An announcement was made by senior leadership around the time of my visit that reductions in personnel was likely to occur. One institutional leader, Margaret Smith, explained that she was optimistic that the state had faith that UT would recover from these issues. She explained that the state had recently spent several millions of dollars on new buildings and infrastructure at UT. She noted that the investments would not have been made if the university was not seen as sustainable: “I just can’t believe that they would... move forward with these buildings if they didn’t believe it.”

Many of the new buildings are linked to services and changes for student success. For example, the library facilities were redesigned to have the feeling of a learning commons. Included in other new buildings were the offices for the newly redesigned positions focusing on student retention and degree completion, offices for transfer student

services, offices for staff focused on career services, and services related to tutoring. All participants cited the leading role that the newly redesigned and expanded office space dedicated to student success efforts was playing on the University of Transformation (UT) campus. A leader within this office, Margaret Smith, explained that prior to this redesign, the similar, previous model was focused on issues related to success faced by the institution's freshmen. However, in the new office, she explained, "We deal with all students on all issues, for anything they have that may keep them from graduation." She expounded, "We have a large staff, extremely good staff, extremely well-qualified staff who look at all things that keep students from graduating... including the [name of required exam]." Other specific services offered through this office include professional advising, coordination of collaborative programming, peer mentoring, success workshops, in-class academic presentations, and tutoring. Many of these tasks are accomplished through coordination with other offices as well as with faculty interactions across campus. A focus group member acknowledged that their collaboration with UT faculty has a dual purpose. First, faculty on the campus have served as advocates for this support by inviting staff from this office to speak about services in classroom settings or by making sure students are aware of the services. Second, some faculty members on campus work closely with the office to provide academic-related services, such as tutoring.

Besides functioning in a context with high interaction with other lateral service offices and faculty, leaders in this office have interactions with other campus leaders and administration. This has facilitated action in regards to policy adjustments to streamline student pathways for success. For example, Margaret Smith explained that the

incomplete policy at the University of Transformation (UT) had been changed recently. In the past, students were allowed a timeline of one year to address a grade of incomplete. However, the issue was that students “went home for the summer, and when they came back in the fall [for] their new classes, [they were] forgetting [that] all of those I’s would turn into F’s.” This hindered progress to completion. To address this, the policy timeline was changed to six weeks to foster student and faculty action earlier. In addition, UT recently changed their midterm grade check policy. In the past, midterms were completed by faculty once in the middle of the semester. The policy change that recently occurred is described by a UT faculty member, Jeremy Simons:

We report midterm grades here... I think this is the only other institution I’ve ever been that I’ve ever taught at where we had to report midterm grades. That’s not universal by any means... But, this semester, instead of reporting midterm grades, we were told to report 5-week and 10-week grades out of the thought that students would... [by] seeing their grade earlier, and then at the 10-week point, would trigger action in them.

That means this policy would allow students to make either or both early changes for improvement and/or reactionary changes at the end of the semester.

Efforts for student success have allowed leaders at the University of Transformation (UT) to collaborate for effectiveness. One staff leader discussed collaborations to make stronger ties between faculty and student tutoring services. Another staff member talked about collaborative efforts with career services staff to provide targeted programming for at-risk students.

Change initiatives are not just focused in offices of student support or even primarily at at-risk student groups. One faculty member at the University of Transformation (UT) also explained the importance of relationship development. He acknowledged that the types of relationships built between faculty and students are valued. One example that shows a monetary commitment has links to UT's research mission. The university offers a special research grant to faculty that incorporate students into the research process. The faculty member described a research project that he conducted with four undergraduate students; now those students will be leaving an undergraduate experience with a peer-reviewed research publication.

Relationships and connections seemed to be the factors that allowed for transformations in services and measureable achievements in student success at the University of Transformation. Staff, faculty, administration, and students worked together to make success happen for the institution as well as the students

Summary

Although faced with addressing similar performance funding accountability measures, each of the five universities included in this case study has a unique history, mission, and role within its state. No two campuses looked the same physically. In addition, participants at each of the institutions described the mission and state role of their university as being unique, often citing the specific student population(s) served.

However, the case universities also had commonalities. In addition to being public institutions receiving performance funding, the five case institutions have roles that focus on teaching and learning. In addition, the student populations at the five institutions were shifting to represent more at-risk student groups. In the next chapter

(chapter 5), the between-case analysis will demonstrate how each of these five institution's efforts during a time of transition are thematically related and also how they diverge. This thematic analysis will add to the depth of this exploration.

Chapter 5

Between-Case Findings

This research study was guided by the central question: *How is institutional change occurring at four-year public institutions to foster student success?* This essential question as well as the four research sub-questions served as guides during the planning and data collection phases in determining case institutions, interview and focus group participants, interview and focus group protocols and questions, and observations made about the physical environment on the case campuses. To some degree, these questions also served as guides during the data analysis phase; however, one tenet of qualitative research is that the researcher needs to be open to new discoveries, to expect the unexpected. This philosophical approach to qualitative research is the underlying belief system that I utilized while working to discover depth in the cross-case analysis phase of this multiple-case study.

This philosophical approach of allowing for the discovery of the unexpected shaped how this chapter of between-case analyses was written. This chapter contains an exploration of the themes that emerged when analyzing data from the five case institutions. Creswell (2013) analogized themes in qualitative research to that of family units; each theme has children and grandchildren, segments of data that are contained with the theme. Each theme family is made up of children and possibly grandchildren that represent segments of data.

Six themes emerged from the exploration of institutions' efforts to consider and address new state performance funding accountability policies. In addition to the themes in this study being analogized to families; the themes in this study cluster around

neighborhoods of meaning. Three of the themes have stronger ties to the central purpose of this research study; these themes include: (1) a consideration of the institution's role within a state system, (2) an increasing impetus to gather and utilize meaningful institutional data, and (3) reliance on increasing efficiency and effectiveness, often though a desire to use collaborative efforts. The other three themes that emerged during this study clustered in the neighborhoods of (a) organizational change and leadership and (b) student success efforts. Participants acknowledged the importance of these clusters and their themes but did not directly link them to the transition to performance-based funding measures. These three themes that emerged are: (1) the role of leadership in times of change, (2) the complexity of institutions, and (3) best practices for student success. Each of the six themes is considered in detail. In addition, a table demonstrating the themes and their neighborhoods is included in Table 2.

Table 2

Clusters and themes of study findings

Cluster	Themes	Meaning
Performance Funding and Student Success	Institutional role in a higher education system	Universities do not exist in accountability vacuums. Specific roles within a system add understanding to reactions to accountability.
	Need for meaningful data	Quality data allows institutions to become aware of their performance in specific measures of success. Meaningful data facilitates decision-making.
	Efficiency and effectiveness	When resources are tight, actions for improvement on performance measures need to be efficient and effective.
Organization Change and Leadership	Role of leadership in times of change	Quality leaders facilitate changes at all levels within the organization.
	Complexity of institutions	Universities cannot consider an issue (i.e., performance funding) in isolation; institutions are faced with several complicating issues at once.
Student Success	Best practices	Research on student success had demonstrated strategies for student retention and graduation.

Performance-Based Funding and Student Success

The central purpose of this multiple-case study was to explore efforts for student success at institutions transitioning into the use of state performance-based funding accountability measures. The three themes that emerged in this research study with links to the relationship between state performance funding policy implementation and institution level efforts for student success will be explored.

Theme I: Institutional Role within a Higher Education System

Colleges and universities do not exist as silos of academe or in isolation from their peers. This is evident not only as a result of this study. This can be seen when reading national, regional, or state comparison lists in periodicals; when reading national, regional, or state news articles considering outcomes from institutions; or when considering education goals presented by state leaders. Evidence from this investigation supports this premise. To understand this theme related to participants' perceptions of their institutions' roles, context is necessary. Table 3 shows the relationship between each of the five institutions included in this multiple-case study and their states' foci in utilizing performance metrics. Exact formulas are not included, but the metrics used within the formula are listed.

Table 3

Case Institutions and State Performance Funding Metrics

State and institutions within state	Metric focus summary list
State A University of Community Achievement Student Focus University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degrees awarded with extra points for community college transfer students, students over age 30, and Pell Grant recipients • Degrees in STEM, Allied Health, and other high priority fields • Research grants (number and dollar) as applicable to institution role in state • Number of degrees awarded per \$100,000 of state appropriation
State B Individual Students University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attainment outcomes: degrees awarded with specific focus on Pell Grant recipients, students with ACT scores less than 19, students age 25 or older, STEM, health, and education • Intermediate outcomes: students who have less than 19 ACT score who successfully complete first college English or math that is not remedial, numbers of students who cross the 30 credit hours and 60 credit hours thresholds • Research activity (but only for research universities) • Productivity: number of undergraduate degrees per 100 fulltime enrolled, number of graduate degrees per 100 fulltime enrolled, number of degrees awarded per \$100,000 of state appropriation
State C Commitment University University of Transformations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment: in-state and underrepresented students • Degrees awarded: in general, number per fulltime faculty, number per fulltime student • Affordability, need-based borrowing, tuition assessment • Regional review • Retention rate • Transfer, dual enrollment • Research • Campus safety and security

**This table provides summary of each policy only and does not reflect the exact weighting used for each metric with the actual funding formula. Information was summarized from state documents and the National Council on State Legislatures (2015).*

Table 3 provides summary information relevant to understanding why the emerging theme of institutional role within the state higher education system may vary

from participants across institutions in regards to specific contexts even though participants from each institution addressed their role within the context of a higher education system. For the purpose of this study, institutions with a major focus on teaching were selected to participate; however, research goals were mentioned by participants at four of the five case institutions, and research was a larger focus of two of the institutions' roles as presented in their formal missions and other institution and state documents.

When describing the role or purpose of their university, participants at each of the five case institutions described a student and/or teaching focus. An academic leader at the University of Community Achievement (UCA), Mary Brown, described:

We are a... regional comprehensive university, and... our vision and our goals are consistent with those of a sort of regional comprehensive, but they're particular to serving the education and employment needs of [the state's] citizens... We serve a diverse array of students in terms of preparation for college, age, life circumstances, work status, etc.

A focus group participant from Commitment University (CU) also considered the overall role of her institution:

Maybe I shouldn't share, but what you're [another participant] speaking to [when talking about image] was almost an undervalued concept. We fill sort of a unique role in the [area] in my opinion. And there's been a push in the past to get higher academic standards for the new students, but I love that we're a place for that student who maybe didn't do as great because they will learn their potential here. It's a great place.

Multiple participants across the five case institutions mentioned the role of their institution within the context of student type. In addition to the comments above, other participants acknowledged their institutions' histories in serving historically underserved students, adult learners, students with less high school preparation, low-income students, first-generation students, and other students who maybe be considered at-risk. A focus group participant at Individual Students University (ISU) commented:

So many of them are first-generation students. We have an overwhelming majority of our students that are first-generation college students. They don't have that support structure to tell them, "Okay, this is what you do if you're getting in trouble with a class" or "This is how you handle financial aid."

Mitchell Rice, a faculty member at CU, explained:

...it's part of our reality. We have a significant number of first-generation students. We have a significant number of relatively low-income students. Most of our students are from [the state]... Our admission standards are not as high as some of the other schools in the state, so we're taking more at-risk students than many of our sister institutions across the state.

These comments demonstrate that the campuses included in this multiple-case study fill roles in their states in serving students typically considered more at-risk of completing college.

When considering these participant comments in light of the state performance metrics utilized in the three states included in this study, a clear connection exists for some metrics, but perhaps not for others. Each of the three state performance funding

policies represented in this study reflect a focus on the course and/or degree completion of at-risk student groups; this metric links to the roles of the five universities. Brian Green, an institutional leader at Student Focus University (SFU), explained that the metrics used in his state were “aligning with what our mission is.” However, some disconnects can be seen as well; a leader from Commitment University (CU), Miles Harrison, explained:

This renewed interest [in student success] has helped sort of refocus and re-staff internally. And there’s some expectations from the general assembly... Because of the age of shared information, we get compared electronically to every other school in the system, and we don’t fare well in some of those things.

A leader from the University of Transformation (UT), Margaret Smith, echoed this idea of state system comparisons:

I think the state... doesn’t fund equitably. They do not understand the different mission of a school such as our institution compared to other, larger, well-endowed institutions; so when they do measures like basing funding on graduation rates or retention rates, initially one would think that that’s a really fair way to do it, but if you look at where our students come from and how far we have to go to get them to where they’re trying to go, we’re at an incredible disadvantage. Our retention rates can’t be the same as some of the [other institutions]... because they have so many students applying that they’re turning students away.

A faculty member focus group participant at Individual Students University (ISU) commented:

I think that our governing body has to understand the missions of institutions. The research institutions, your “tier ones” in the state... that have a very specific mission, and also the regional institutions, as we are one of the regionals, has a very specific mission... I mean, quite frankly, some of our students would never succeed at some of the tier one institutions because they would not get the personal help they get here, that remediation and instruction, that good relationship with the advisor, the [name of program title] help.

In addition, a faculty member from the UT commented:

These performance funding measures that look at four- to six-year graduate rates just don't properly account for an institution where a student might take seven years or eight years because they're going part-time – or an institution where a student might start, stop, and then, for whatever reason, usually having to do with home life, they stop, and then the return in the seventh, eighth, tenth, or twentieth year. I had a student here when I first started teaching who was returning after 50 years.

These participant comments show that understanding an institution's mission and student population and the connection of these elements to state metrics and perceived state goals relates to how institution faculty and staff interpret whether or not their mission has shared values with the perceived state values. Some participants saw a disconnect in this relationship when they perceived that the state was “standardizing” higher education and

specifically setting goals that may seem daunting based on students' college preparation levels. However, more weight was put on outcomes for at-risk students in two of the states, whereas enrollment was a larger focus in the third.

Even at institutions where participants indicated that the new state performance metrics, as written, would be beneficial to their institutions, they expressed concern about follow-through with the use of the metrics as they were currently written. Two of the three states represented in this study had temporarily frozen funding practices within early years of the performance-based funding; when the policy timeline indicated that funds should be distributed using the performance metrics, the state postponed doing so during this transition period. Brian Green of Student Focus University (SFU) considered that some institutions may be at more of an advantage when approaching performance-based funding:

We're kind of like the Goldilocks syndrome... Being in the middle, I think, matters. We've always seen that not being the largest or smallest, but just right... we can do things that other institutions can't, either because they're too big (they're like turning a yacht... or like an ocean liner)... or [the institution won't] have the resources to make the turn [because they're too small].

This puts larger institutions at a pacing disadvantage but a resource advantage and the smaller institutions at a resource disadvantage but a pacing advantage. Middle-sized institutions are "just right" to adjust to meet metrics. Individual Students University (ISU) leader, Mike Roberts, made a similar comment about an institutional advantage:

There's a multiplier effect [in the formula] that does a little bit offsetting for what regional institutions do compared to what research institutions do. And research institutions are primarily traditional-aged students; [at] regionals, we teach where we're planted, and that makes the regionals a little bit different... [Because of this] we have done well under the metrics.

When considering how program changes could be made, Brian Green of Student Focus University (SFU) commented:

The problem is because it's not a single system in the fact that I can't say I get one more student in [specific STEM program at university name] or some [other] STEM field that equates to 75 dollars of the state allocation... there's nothing clean like that because every year it's about the whole group... So, we can do better, but, if everyone else does it even better than we do... [then] individual improvement doesn't necessarily guarantee anything in outcomes based funding.

Green expounded on this point by highlighting the competitive nature that has been developed within the state; he indicated he would prefer a system in which systematic collaboration was valued to benefit all institutions and students.

The complicating issues within state systems of higher education can be seen in other respects as well. Focus group participants at Individual Students University (ISU) and interview participants at the University of Transformation (UT) and Commitment University (CU) indicated that some institution types referred to by one participant as the institutions with the "football teams" or were the "doctoral institutions" have larger

voices in state legislatures. A participant at CU commented that legislatures sitting many miles away in the state capital might not have institutions like CU in their thoughts.

Focus group participants at ISU noted that the legislators themselves are more often graduates of the tier one institutions. Faculty member Mitchell Rice from CU explained:

I think it's very important for any state legislature to realize where its colleges are located and what is available to them in the way of outside resources. But when you're sitting in the legislature in [the state capital] and see a significant city when you look out the window, you don't think about the [Commitment Universities] of the world.

One ISU focus group participant summarized, "We have trouble having the political push that we need."

Despite participants either expressing concern that metrics in their state were written without consideration for institutions' individual missions and roles; whether participants reported that, because of the way metrics were written, their institutions were standing in a place to gain financially; or whether some participants felt that the voices from institutions like theirs, more regional institutions, were not heard by state policymakers, participants at the case institutions emphasized that having expectations is necessary in higher education. For example, Sophia Van Dorn of the University of Community Achievement (UCA) explained that performance funding is "pushing the envelope of accountability" and noted that despite fear from change in general, "It kind of causes innovative thought. I think that's important." Accountability and innovative thought are linked to the second theme from this research study, a need for meaningful data, which is explored next.

Theme II: Need for Meaningful Data

Improvement through this “innovative thought” does not occur in happenstance. Change, for better or worse, happens for a reason. Understanding that reason can allow for the design and use of purposeful initiatives for positive outcomes. The collection and use of meaningful data, as a theme, emerged from the five institutions. This theme demonstrates that institutional capacity-building is being addressed, or is desired, at institutions in states with performance-based funding. The use of data for decisions occurs at multiple levels within institutions, and that data can assist in fostering internal conversations about student success.

Data should be meaningful. When talking about data that was being collected or had been collected in the past, some participants indicated frustration with the quality of the data collected. Rita Murphy from the University of Community Achievement (UCA) gave an example:

I've not been particularly impressed with the assessment work that [specific division] has undertaken. I think it's not particularly robust. It had tended to focus on numbers of student served, numbers of appointments, and counseling sessions scheduled... I did some looking around at retention programs across [UCA] and found that while we have a significant number of these retention programs, relatively only a handful of them have any kind of assessment measures in place, and of those, they're poorly developed.

A focus group participant at UCA working in an area targeted on retention efforts validated this statement when he commented that under a previous leader, he and his

colleagues “had to show it [efforts] by hash marks.” The participant said that this was “quantitative versus qualitative” assessment of what was being done within the program, and he did not think the data collected were meaningful.

In addition to data collection issues at program levels, participants at one institution expressed concern over national data collection efforts. Student Focus University (SFU) has a large population of adult learners, many of whom are part-time students and/or returners to higher education or transfers from community colleges. Interview participants and focus group members expressed concern that their institution is not well-represented in a well-known national data collection. They posited that this is because much of the types of data being collected for measuring retention and graduation only focus on first-time enrollees and those enrollees are only followed for up to six years after enrollment. A leader from SFU, Ava Miller, explained:

You think about the [nationally known data collection] measure; seven percent of our students fit the [nationally known data collection] of first-time, full-time students. So most of... the official measurement for... certainly graduation, if you want to define student success that way [makes SFU numbers look low]... One of the things [SFU] has started doing is... we've started using the [different data collection] model... In addition to looking at graduation, it's also measures part-time, transfers, readmits, so not just the first-year students.

One participant at the University of Transformation (UT) also mentioned this facet of national data collection related to measures of student success, that sometimes the known and more traditional sources of data on higher education do not collect or represent data

that reflects the student types at particular institutions. Leaders at SFU have looked to this other method for institution-wide data collection that more accurately reflect a picture of the students and their progress in addressing state accountability efforts.

Participants at Individual Students University (ISU), Commitment University (CU), and the University of Community Achievement (UCA) explained that collection of meaningful data may be difficult because of the way institutions have approached or are approaching student success efforts. A focus group member at UCA explained:

A few people have talked about a reaction approach [to increasing student success]. There's also the shotgun approach, which also means that if we do see enough ticks in student persistence, we're not going to really know why... They'll be many initiatives, many departments, many individuals who will say it's because of our residential experience, our athletic experience, the advising experience, the [name of first-year experience]. But the way we are assessing our effects, because they are so uncoordinated, I think that the result will be that we won't know why and will continue to expend a great deal of resources on many, many things when it might not be the many, many things that are making the difference.

A leader at ISU, John Lipsky, explained:

I think in retention – you're probably seeing this in a lot of places – retention in a lot of ways is a shotgun approach. Let's change this, let's do this, maybe that, and you never really know what is having an effect

except for that particular number of students... you don't really think about focused impacts.

As Lipsky from ISU continued to explain, just as the focus group participant from UCA argued for the in preceding comment, is that institutions need to find ways to gather and use meaningful data.

John Lipsky from Individual State University continued his comments on data by explaining that his institution had been working with a professional higher education consulting firm. Lipsky explained, "Our consultant has talked to us about that [data use] and that is really more of a very focused initiative [how data is collected and used]."

Another participant at ISU, Mike Roberts explained:

We've consulted with [name of company] primarily and brought in some other one-shot kinds of conversations [with others]. We have developed a pretty robust set of analysis tools. Some are useful by deans and department chairs, some are useful at the institution level, but we've tried to build a culture around evidence-based decision-making instead of, "Well, I think that's the way it is because last time I looked at it, it was that way" which could have been ten years ago, five years ago, or last month.

ISU was not alone in this venture to find new ways of developing building institutional capacity for collecting meaningful data. Four of the five institutions had participants mention the use of outside companies as playing a role in their data collection process, either for consulting purposes or for software packages. Within the last few years, one of the institutions, Student Focus University (SFU), adjusted budgeting to allow for the

creation of a campus institutional research office to assist with the collection and dissemination of data. The focus of these actions has been to not simply collect data, but to collect data that would allow for analysis that had meaning.

Specifically, institution administration, staff, and faculty were working to have access to meaningful data that could be utilized for decision-making. Participants at the five case institutions discussed the use of data in decision-making. In addition, data were not only used for decision-making at the top administrative levels but also were utilized by mid-level administration, staff, and faculty; participants at each level discussed the importance of data to their professional lives.

For example, Jim Grey, a leader at Commitment University (CU), commented, “If we’re going to make an investment in learning communities... because we know how important the power of cohort is in retention... if we can look at some groups that have low retention rates, that’s even better.” A focus group participant from CU provided:

I do a lot of data reporting for anyone who needs it, and I’ve noticed not only more requests on how students do in certain classes or midterm grades or final grades, but even individual instructors are actually closely looking at their own courses and weighing in different factors about their students who are taking it and how they’re doing.

Another example of what kinds of data are being used for decisions came from Brian Green at Student Success University (SFU):

I identified for every program where we had the highest retention loss... they’re causing a barrier to advancing... so the idea is that I asked each of

the programs to identify a course and then come up with a retention plan... And we had some moderate success.

In addition, examples cited by other participants demonstrated the use of (or desire to use) data for planning and action included decisions about which classes to target with supplemental instructors, how to target the outreach of student mentors, general education assessments, growth or reduction in certain areas (i.e., program reduction at one institution and increase in advising staff at another), and adjustments in advising practices. One specific example was provided by John Lipsky from ISU; he explained that supplemental instructors were going to be used in several courses in the next academic year. Data was used to identify the “killer courses” or courses with the highest rates of Ds, Fs, or withdrawals and supplemental instructors will be included in these courses.

Not only are more decisions being made based on data, but the collection of data is also playing a role in campus discussions about student success. Mid-level campus leaders explained the process of data communication to be top-down. Institutional leaders share relevant data with mid-level leaders who then pass along their department- or office-relevant data to their staffs. In addition, data related to student success efforts is also being used to within conversations across divisions, departments, or in other collaborative discussions. For example, when describing how to engage faculty in programs suggested by staff, one focus group participant from Commitment University (CU) explained the following:

Before we look at a bridge program, a mentor program, any of these things, the first thing I do is I have to benchmark against our peer

institutions, and I have to benchmark against other schools in [the state]. I have to find a theory. I have to find numbers on return on investment, and I have to do almost like a reverse budget in that, if we retain X amount of students, how much money is the university saving?

This process highlights the use of data and planning within institution discussions. A mid-level leader at University of Community Achievement (UCA) acknowledged using a similar discussion process when working with her staff to address program and policy concerns. Sophia Van Dorn explained, “It’s not changing because you think it’s stinky, it’s changing because you need to dig through the data and understand the – what you know, why we need to do things differently, and then we can implement the change.” Before changes were considered, data-backed information needed to be presented. Lonna Wilcox at Individual Students University (ISU) commented, “I think it [performance funding] has caused us all to be more data driven and to ask questions... to look at something and wonder why... so we’ve been making more informed decisions.”

Theme III: Efficiency and Effectiveness

With strong ties to the previous theme, efficiency and effectiveness emerged in the exploration of institutions whose funding was tied to performance. As a leader from the University of Community Achievement (UCA), Sophia Van Dorn, noted, changes related to funding call for creativity. This creativity involves ways of “doing more with less,” a phrase used by focus group participants at more than one case institution, in some situations and simply doing less in other instances.

Some participants at the five institutions mentioned budget cuts as a state issue; three institutions were undergoing or had recently undergone reductions in personnel.

These factors are not results of performance-based funding but do highlight the importance of making solid decisions about initiatives directed to student success efforts during times of funding changes. None of the participants in this multiple-case study described their higher education institutions as being in a position in which money was ample and where any and all student success efforts could be funded. Actions needed to be targeted; in other words, the theme of efficiency and effectiveness was considered by participants in the five case institutions. As one participant from Commitment University (CU), Kent Robinson, explained, “As our CFO is fond of saying... it’s easier to keep one than it is to recruit one.”

This theme is linked to other themes that emerged. Efficiency and effectiveness were linked to the use of best practices for student success as well as to the role of institutional leadership. These concepts are addressed in more depth later in this chapter, but this preview provides context for the exploration of the theme efficiency and effectiveness. Efficiency and effectiveness are explored in this section in regards to: (a) collaborative versus competitive efforts, (b) considering duplication, (c) streamlining efforts for consistency, and (d) use of the internet.

Participants at the five institutions addressed the idea of collaboration for efficiency at various levels within and outside of their organizations. At the institutional level, several participants explained the use of collaboration in providing targeted use of best practices for student success. For example, John Lipsky, a leader at Individual Students University (ISU) explained a new initiative in which students taking developmental reading would also take a companion course, a course that would provide the text that would be used in the reading class but would also give the students a chance

to gain credit toward a degree (as developmental courses do not count for degree completion). Lipsky provided another example at ISU as well. As per advice of an outside consultant, the staff coordinating the campus orientation week for first-year students will be working to incorporate a more academic focus; this is being accomplished through staff, faculty, and student government collaboration. A leader at the University of Transformation (UT), Frederick Crestwell, cited an example of collaboration between career services staff and faculty in supporting a campus career fair. Participants from both UT and Commitment University (CU) mentioned learning communities as examples of faculty and staff collaboration. Participants from both CU and the University of Community Achievement (UCA) cited examples of faculty and staff collaboration for advising efforts. Student Focus University (SFU) participants described a physical move of offices with related functions to foster collaboration to get students in and through campus life; these included offices functioning in recruitment, admissions, financial aid, and enrollment.

This internal collaborative efforts allow faculty and staff to keep students as their focus; one focus group participant from the University of Transformation (UT) explained:

I know it's a lot of collaborative efforts between student affairs [and] academic affairs because it covers the whole spectrum of being in college – inside the classroom, outside the classroom... So it [a particular initiative] allows student some opportunity to get that outside of the classroom feel, a little bit informal feel, with the professor as well as with

the student affairs professional... Students are able to really engage that way.

A focus group participant at Student Focus University (SFU) also noted that another effect of internal collaboration is “cross training” or the ability to “know pretty much everybody on campus” and what they do.

However, beyond understanding that internal collaboration exists, participants also expounded on how this collaboration increasing efficiency. Multiple participants at Student Focus University (SFU) talked about collaborative programming between faculty and staff. One example explained by a focus group participant was an event that a science program was planning to host; however, to effectively manage the cost and reach of the program, they collaborated with a student activities office to co-facilitate the event. This meant that monies were shared across offices and that student participation was increased. Focus group participants at the University of Transformation (UT) shared a similar example. Various student success offices, housing, and student activities pooled efforts to host study and tutor marathon during review for final exams. This allowed each office to share efforts and target a larger pool of students.

These types of efforts led participants to explain the benefits of collaboration. A focus group participant at Individual Student University (ISU) explained, “There seems to be a better understanding from campus now that it’s not just the faculty, it’s not just the [name of student success office], it’s all of us. We all have to work together to make these students successful.” A leader from the University of Transformation (UT), Sarah Greenburg, reiterated, “From outside looking in, sometimes it looks like all things are

working together to make a [school mascot used as noun for a student] a complete student.”

Collaboration can be seen in efforts at the institution level as well. For example, Student Focus University (SFU) has partnered with a private flight school for the purpose of developing an aviation program and with sister institutions to develop another STEM program. The University of Community Achievement (UCA) was encouraged by institution level leadership to make efforts to collaborate with private businesses and non-profits to increase the levels of student engagement through practices like the use of service learning and internships. A focus group participant from Individual Students University (ISU) explained how this type of collaboration can streamline transfer issues:

I specifically target community colleges, work with community college counselors to make sure that I'm pre-advising students before they're ever [ISU] students, and that's on purpose so they don't waste Pell funding or other financial aid sources before they get here, to make sure they're on track from day one even if they are transferring... What we were seeing is we were having several students come into our program that had two, sometimes three associates degrees, and they were within a semester or two of running out of financial aid when they get here if they were Pell.

Despite benefits of collaboration, some participants explained that the new state funding policy could lead to competition for a few reasons. Internally, Lonna Wilcox at leader at Individual Students University (ISU) explained that this competition can be good. She expounded that “in the past our recruitment and retention efforts [led to] some pushback from the faculty saying that it's all on [admissions staff].” Because of the new

metrics, faculty themselves were being competitive within the colleges to take more ownership of recruitment because colleges that were doing well in this were filling requested faculty lines.

However, a leader at the University of Community Achievement (UCA), Sophia Van Dorn, described a situation in which internal competition was a negative. She explained that during another time when funding was a concern, that “even though we were supposed to be collaborating, that it was almost a bit of a competition” because “it was pretty much everybody protecting their budgets.”

The issue with competition was expressed by some participants as a concern at a state level or an institution-to-institution level. Participants at Commitment University (CU) and Individual Students University (ISU) explained that different institution types had different roles and that sometimes the more well-known (typically research universities) did not have as hard of a time competing for students, in particular students that were less likely to struggle at a university. As Brian Green from Student Focus University (SFU) commented, institutions in his state all had access to the same “small fishing pond.” There are a limited number of students and in particular a limited number of traditional-aged students with higher high school test scores or GPAs; the smaller institutions with a teaching focus tended to need to “fish in ponds” with more at-risk students, students with lower high school GPAs, lower standardized test scores, low-income students, nontraditional students, etc.

Brian Green from Student Focus University (SFU) also noted:

There's no collaboration metric, so as a system we're not working together. It's a competitive world, and that's tough... I would love to work together, and I would love to be rewarded for working together.

A focus group participant, also from SFU wondered "who would get the points" when institutions collaborated within the state. (Note: State documentation demonstrates that a formal suggestion was made to the state legislature to address this concern.)

Despite the competition that can exist, a participant in a focus group at the University of Community Achievement (UCA) explained:

We're more connected to the system at this point than we ever have been before, so we are not an isolated institution. It's a system connection that is growing, and... I don't know if we'll have less campuses in the system, but I'm guess that we will probably start to see more specialized areas on campuses or some sort of a direction for campuses working together, probably more across discipline, academic majors, less duplication.

In addition Winston Fields, a faculty member at Community University (CU), used the following analogy when thinking about the importance of collaborating or at least playing a role with student success efforts:

It's sort of like... a problem in a community or a country... like too much CO2 emissions or something like that. And like CO2 emissions are really bad, and it's bad for the world, but I'm just driving my car... and anything I do just makes a little bit of a difference, so I'm not going to do anything. But then at some level, all of those collective pieces should add up to something bigger.

Thus, the roles that each institutional member plays can either make small differences toward student attrition or toward student success. Efficiency and effectiveness in large and small actions matter. Perhaps, rather than fuel efficient cars, universities have student success efficient personnel.

Some collaborative efforts allowed for student services to be focus more on “customer service” and to streamline efficiency and effectiveness for student use. For example, leadership at Student Focus University (SFU) reorganized to develop a one-stop service that encompassed offices and functions related to enrollment. This meant that staff working in admissions, advising, and other areas related to enrollment were all housed physically in offices near each other and it also allowed for increased communication between these services. At Individual Students University (ISU), their office that had been dedicated to student success efforts was retitled, staff was added, roles and job duties were more spread out, and connections were made with shared staff within the university’s colleges. This was done to increase lines of communication and effectiveness in serving students, particularly new students to the university. Events at the University of Transformation (UT) were similar to those at ISU. At UT, the office dedicated to student success efforts was renamed, relocated, staff was increased, and efforts were shifted from being primarily focused on first-year students to having a focus of students at all levels. This was done to further facilitate students transitioning through the university successfully. At Commitment University (CU), positions focusing primarily on retention were created and a consulting firm’s efforts on campus increased involvement of staff and faculty across the university in these efforts. Structural and reporting changes have been made at the University of Community Achievement (UCA)

as well; however, because new leadership was about to transition in, participants seemed uncertain about the future of these adjustments.

Beyond collaborative efforts, institutions have made other adjustments to increase efficiency and maintain effectiveness. Participants at some institutions discussed how duplicative efforts had been eliminated, and others discussed the need to expand the scope by eliminating other duplicative efforts. For example, participants at three institutions discussed communication that was being more streamlined to reduce the times that students were either being contacted about a similar issues from multiple campus offices or were being solicited to participate in multiple student success programs because they met requirements for more than one initiative. A focus group participant at the University of Community Achievement (UCA) explained:

My fear with the communication piece is something gets lost, so we're calling these students multiple times. And I think that that's happened in the past... And so that's a place we as an institution need to move to work for... so students don't get four phone calls within a month [about the same issue].

Another specific example of this was described at Individual Students University (ISU). Some ISU students were solicited to participate in multiple events (i.e., honors lectures, program specific activities, etc.) that fell on the same date or time period, so the campus is developing a way to share calendars and program information to ensure that events are not overlapping. A similar approach was taken at Commitment University (CU) when addressing programs; offices worked to collaboration to share programming to increase participation and outreach.

However, the University of Transformation (UT) took a different approach when considering efficiency. For example, during registration time, rather than reduce the number of contacts students were receiving about registration, contact increases were encouraged. Both faculty and staff were encouraged to “hit them as many times” as they could so that students received several reminders about the registration deadlines. Despite different approaches, the idea of duplication was considered in its relationship to the balance between efficiency and effectiveness.

When considering practices that could be made more efficient and effective, participants also mentioned the idea of working to be more consistent within the institution. One focus group participant expressed concern about efforts at Commitment University (CU):

I think it's like the administration has a plan and they're working toward it, and we, the movers and shakers, have a plan and we're working toward it. But we're sort of heading off in two different directions. And every now and then we'll intersect and we'll have something in common, and it works. But then we stray off again, and then we come back together, and then we stray off. And so, I don't think there's a lot of consistency.

Another focus group participant at CU suggested a reason for this lack of consistency:

They all sort of have their own definition in mind of what that [student success] means. I still think sometimes we're working toward different directions... Because res life, maybe they have a definition of student success that looks very different than from a psychology [department] faculty member... I think we're missing that piece of continuity or

consistency for all of us to kind of be channeling that same goal, but I do think they're committed.

Sophia Van Dorn, a leader at the University of Community Achievement (UCA) gave a more specific example of inconsistency:

In promotion and tenure, advising is not – I reviewed 20-something documents from the different departments. Advising is mentioned. Sometimes it's mentioned as registration, sometimes it's mentioned as advising student groups, sometimes it's mentioned as – I think there's two or three that mention this – that there's a relationship with the student. So, it's really disjointed, and as I read through those things, I was like, one, how can we bring some consistency to it? And two, how do we make it valuable? Because right now with that inconsistency, it's not valued... at least through the promotion and tenure guidelines.

A focus group participant at UCA emphasized that communication practices as well as practices for financial reporting were not done the same way across different offices. A different focus group participant explained efforts for student success at UCA, "I think sometimes we have a lot of dots out there doing pieces, and we don't connect the dots."

Focus group participants at Individual Students University (ISU) expressed a similar concern. They explained that their early warning program, in which faculty report student concerns to staff members, had inconsistent guidelines with when or how the form should be completed. An ISU focus group participant expounded:

Let me put it this way: I work in the [office that runs the early alerts], and I went and asked for it [directions on how the process works], and I didn't

get it. And that's a very frustrating thing because it's like there's all this confusion about who's supposed to be submitting what, and who does this, and who does that... It's frustrating for me because you get to the point where you're like, "I'm not doing any more of these [early alert forms], they're not worth it."

Similarly, Jim Grey, a leader at Commitment University (CU) noted that advising within the different colleges produced a "lack of consistency in process, in training, and in protocols."

Efforts for consistency were not completely lacking. Institutions have made progress to develop consistency in some efforts at some levels. For example, Brian Green at Student Focus University (SFU) explained that, for the 13 different sections of the same required English course, efforts had been made to work to have a "consistent product" by "working on creating rubrics and things of that sort to make sure that no matter what section you're in, you're kind of being evaluated in a consistent manner." In addition, a leader at Commitment University (CU), Miles Harrison, explained that multiple instructors for their first-year experience course came from both staff and faculty positions and that efforts had been made to have over half of the course curriculum across the sections aligned for consistency, but to also allow individual instructors to tailor their classes (because of the staff member's experience or because a faculty member was teaching a section for students from within his/her college). This type of effort allowed for consistency with flexibility.

Consistency, with some room for flexibility, was what participants were calling for. They wanted to see some generally expected outcomes of student programs, clear

communication of campus roles for faculty and staff, and common practices for functional tasks like paperwork, but they also wanted flexibility that allowed for a focus on individual student needs and individual personnel special skills.

Flexibility relates to the final area of discussion for the theme of efficiency and effectiveness. The use of technology has been increasing. Participants explained that the use of digital communication can increase efficiency and effectiveness, if managed properly. This can be done in regards to staff and faculty use of resources as well as student access to courses or support systems.

Much of the data collected as part of internal and external institutional assessments is stored digitally. However, focus group participants at Student Focus University (SFU) stressed that the information needs to be stored in such a way that it is easily accessible. For example, SFU focus group participants described the current digital drive available to employee as having large amounts of information, but that much of it was confusing to access and difficult to navigate. This issue has been mitigated to some degree by the development of a new institutional research office.

A frustration described by a faculty focus group participant at Individual Students University (ISU) was that he spent a majority of his summer time (time which he acknowledged was supposed to be for him to conduct research) developing an online version of a class. He explained:

I... did that design for [an] online course, and it was a lot of work. I spent hours. I must have spent at least 60 hours alone just setting it up and setting up the cameras because I decided to go with hand written. I was handwriting in front of a camera so students could see my hands working

because that tends to [help them] learn math better than just looking through slides... But doing that, recording my voice and getting all that perfect, it was 60, 70 hours of a lot of lectures I threw away... The ones I didn't like, I threw those away, and I did it again. Finally, I got a set of 29 lectures, each about 30 minutes a piece.

Focus group participants at ISU further explained that some faculty avoided teaching online because of the extensive time for development of course content in an online friendly format. ISU focus group participants explained their perspective on time for online classes. First, they said that no release time was given to develop online versions of course materials (lecture videos, interactive activities, etc.), so all preparation work was on their own time. In addition, teaching online classes did not free-up time during the course because faculty are actively engaged in discussion boards and other online meetings with students. Although the method could be more easily accessed by some students, faculty also needed the use of the new technology to be efficient and effective.

Focus group participants at the University of Community Achievement (UCA) noted a concern about the effectiveness of using online courses, especially when working with traditional-aged students. One focus group participant expressed her concern:

I think the online class for the traditional-aged students – it takes some discipline and that's a pretty huge issue lacking in traditional-aged students... As good as the pedagogy can be with online... it does take time management and discipline, and I think that our students struggle with that.

However, another UCA focus group participant did say that online “doesn’t necessarily mean hands-off” and that some online faculty did use effective pedagogies and that when effective teaching methods were used that students could still be engaged in the class. In addition, another focus group participant said that UCA just hired an online advisor.

Student Focus University (SFU) participants described a more consistently positive experience in using online courses for students. However, an institutional leader at SFU described that they had had a long history with multiple modalities for courses. In fact, two leaders at SFU, Brian Green and Ava Miller, noted that, in utilizing data on course success rates, they found their online students were faring just as well as students in more traditional modalities. They did explain that efforts for online services were in part made because of their large population of non-traditional or adult learners.

Besides digital resources for faculty and staff on institutional data and distance course options for students, participants discussed how the internet served efficiency and effectiveness as a platform for student support services. At Student Focus University (SFU), Brian Green explained, “Our goal here is to provide students, regardless of modality, the same student services.” SFU has been in the process of transforming the library into a learning commons and has also extended hours of advising. The parallel to serve online students is that they are building online tutoring options and are offering online advising. According to Green, the online tutoring currently consists of resources like “quick video tutorials about getting started on a research paper and using the library online catalogue and those search engines.” SFU is working to expand online tutoring to other courses as well.

Commitment University (CU) is also using online tutoring. CU partnered with a private company to offer online tutoring services that allow students to receive synchronous or asynchronous tutoring. Jim Grey described this process:

There are two different types [of online tutoring services]. One is with a live person... You can wait for a live person, and again, it's online, so you're typing, you're not talking to them. And you may be in a queue, and it'll tell you how long the queue is so you know approximately how long you'll have to wait if you're online. The other thing you could do is, if you have a specific question, you can submit a question, and you'll get a response back later on.

One of the other features in online assistance in writing papers; Grey explained this feature as well:

And the part that's been used maybe more than anything else... they have a writing clinic that you can download a paper and send it and they – they don't, they're not editors, but they will – and it's really kind of nice the way they do it – they... start by pointing out the strengths of your paper and then [will also] say, as a good English teacher would, that you have these issues. They will point out the first maybe two or three examples of a problem that you have, whether it's noun-verb agreement or tense or whatever it might be... they will say, "You know, there's some more of these in the paper that you need to find." Our English faculty really like that.

In addition, this private company provides campus leadership with regular data about student usage of the services; specifically, the frequency of use and the courses and content asked about are provided to campus staff. This allows staff to have access to data that can demonstrate content areas that students find difficult.

Themes Indirectly Linked to Student Success and Performance-Based Funding

Participants included in this study who were primarily student-facing staff, faculty, or mid-level leaders focused on the changes in their institutions as they perceived them. Not all participant comments had direct links to the state performance-based funding policies or efforts that were occurring as direct result of these policies. This allowed for other themes to emerge that were related to organizational change and leadership and student success best practices. These themes included: (1) the role of leadership in times of change, (2) the complexity of institutions when influenced by multiple dynamics, and (3) best practices for student success.

Theme IV: The Role of Leadership in Times of Change

Leaders play important roles in institutions during times of change regardless of if that change is due to performance funding measures or not. This was made clear by participants at the five case institutions. Specifically, interview and focus group participants described that quality leaders during times of change would: (a) empower followers, (b) demonstrate value for followers, (c) communicate, and (d) develop knowledge to also be a member of a culture of student success.

Participants at the five institutions discussed ways in which leadership was empowering them to serve students or ways that leadership practices were seen as barriers to personnel. Participants explained that in order to be productive, university

personnel needed to be given expectations from leadership, that leaders could align personnel for more collaborative and effective practices, and that leaders could provide support for personnel to perform their duties.

A faculty member at Commitment University (CU), Winston Fields, commented on the idea of needing some level of push from leadership for action:

[The leadership says], “We’re not going to tell you how to make it work. We want it to work. You figure out what works best for your department or college.” And we don’t have any of that kind of process going on in our campus. There’s no entrepreneurial spirit, I don’t think. And nobody is opposed to campus entrepreneurs, but there’s not incentives for them. And there’s a lot of smart people on campus. I bet there’s some good ideas out there.

A faculty focus group participant at Individual Students University (ISU) explained that leadership had asked that ISU faculty to weave a specific best teaching practice into their curriculum; however, he added that faculty were not trained on the method or provided with information on how they would be assessed for having used it. He further explained the importance of thinking about this when considering his role as a teacher:

...But as I’m going to teaching, I feel like other lives are involved now... I can’t require all these kinds of new methodologies without knowing they work or have some influence on my students that are positive – because what I think may be a good idea, may not be a good idea when it comes to student learning outcomes – or even be assessable. Some of those

interesting topics that [are] brought up I don't think you can even assess, not to any significant degree.

A mid-level leader, Mary Brown, at the University of Community Achievement (UCA) commented, "There's a lack of transparency when it comes to the criteria and expectations."

A staff focus group participant from the University of Community Achievement (UCA) explained that several years of leadership changes had resulted in multiple shifts in reporting lines; during those changes, staff had become confused as to which staff and faculty were expected to fulfill what role or had what expectations. A mid-level leader at UCA also commented on this idea of needing to set expectations with the university but without having a clear picture for her because of the frequent changes in senior leadership. Sophia Van Dorn explained that with a particular initiative she was working on, she would need buy-in and set expectations of clear roles and responsibilities for faculty and staff; however, she was trying to accomplish setting expectations for those reporting to her without having clear expectations of what support she would get from incoming new senior leadership. Yet, she was not without hope for the upcoming changes; Van Dorn commented, "This new leader will come in and he will set the expectation that there is a collaborative atmosphere, which I am dying for a new leader to come in and do that."

In addition to having a desire for leadership to voice expectations, participants also discussed the roles that communication and collaboration play in empowering them to be successful. Participants from Individual Students University (ISU), the University of Transformation (UT), Commitment University (CU), and Student Focus University

(SFU) shared positive experiences about being asked to participate in campus committees during times of change or when new initiatives for student success were being developed.

A focus group participant at SFU discussed this experience:

Whenever there's large change, I think they [leadership] do a really good job at inviting people from different departments to serve on committees... We talked a little bit about [name of initiative] for enrollment services [earlier in the focus group]. I was on that committee, and there were people from all sorts of departments, faculty, staff, and so that feels kind of nice to be involved in the process of really being able to understand what's going on on campus.

However, another focus group participant responded that not all members of the campus community are equally involved in these established committees and that an alternate platform for allowing open communication between levels within the institution, forums, was not always scheduled to be something that a large portion of campus faculty and staff could attend.

Participants at the University of Community Achievement (UCA) emphasized a different experience with collaboration for empowerment. One UCA focus group participant commented, "If you [look] within the institution, people are in charge of fixing things, including communication, but they're not asking us. It's universal."

However, another focus group participant justified:

I don't think it's any one person or any intent that is bad, it's just a fast-moving plane, and we hear it a lot that we're building it as we fly it. And I

know it drives people crazy, but that is what we hear a lot. I do think that is part of what I think it's felt like.

Another focus group participant added, "Although they do – 'they' – I'm stuck in upper – always talk about how they want to communicate and add participation, so there is that hope, but it's a lot faster just to make a decision [on their own, without staff input]."

These comments demonstrate the importance of empowering faculty and staff through facilitating open communication.

In addition, participants explained that the campus can benefit from the collaboration that results from open communication practices employed by leadership. Participants at both Individual Students University (ISU) and the University of Transformation (UT) explained that open communication can lead to a better understanding of faculty and staff roles and how those roles are interconnected. A faculty member at ISU presented a specific example. She described that her institution had developed a council of department chairs. This allowed chairs from across the campus to meet regularly. In the past year, this leader of this group had been inviting guests from staff offices to attend these meetings to help the facilitation of a "broad campus approach" to student success efforts.

A focus group member at Student Focus University (SFU) provided an example of a way in which leadership alignment of personnel could empower them to collaborate for student success:

We're trying to break down those silos of admissions, advising, and enrollment... make sure that we're all working together and even just the

location of where everybody is – now financial aid, the registrar, enrollment services are all in one location.

In addition, Brian Green, a leader at SFU described an area in which leadership could build collaboration to empower personnel in working toward student success initiatives. He explained that SFU was considering the use of the cohort model in an online platform. This required that leadership involve faculty by getting their buy-in for teaching and providing support within the online class and required leadership to get enrollment staff to “actually help me build a cohort, [to] pick the right students.” The leadership at SFU needed to align efforts of both faculty and staff to plan for this new initiative.

Participants at Individual Students University (ISU) described the role that direct supervisors as leaders can provide support to allow personnel to be empowered within their work environment. One focus group member commented:

I mean [name of director level leader] is very approachable. He’s really about you can go in there at any point and just be like, here’s what I’ve got on my plate, and he’ll listen and you know he’s good at making you see things from a different perspective without making you feel stupid about it... Another thing that I... really respect about him is he has a very good way of when dealing with an issue, he doesn’t focus on fault or blame at all. It’s like this is the situation, and we have to find a way. And the whole focus is on fixing instead of blame. I think that’s been a very positive thing, especially considering the chaos of the [name of office] before he arrived.

Furthermore, a mid-level leader at ISU, John Lipsky, explained the role of a supervisor who serves as an empowering leader:

There's a good bit of ambiguity because we're finding our way... We need to be comfortable with that, especially when you're in the first year or so of a new initiative... I like to lay out a plan and say we're going to try and follow this, but know we're going to change the plan slightly. Because we want to get from point a to point b, and I may have to go in – success is rarely a straight line, and I understand that and try to teach it to my staff. We're still going to get there, but we may have to move around a little bit.

A mid-level leader from the University of Community Achievement (UCA), Sophia Van Dorn, although acknowledging that leaders were not currently empowering personnel, described what it looks like to see the “boots on the ground” personnel feeling empowered to act on student success efforts by leadership:

I think [in the past] it was more of a grassroots type of thing... The announcement [of change] may have come from on high, but the excitement and change and the activity was with the people that were doing the work, and that just bubbled over. There's a lot of power, and I use power in a really positive sense, there's a lot of power behind people really believing in what they're doing and letting it bubble over so that they talk about it and feel really good about it.

By setting expectations for personnel, listening to the voices of personnel during changes, and aligning for collaboration, leadership at universities can allow faculty and staff to feel empowered during times of change.

Participants in this study also explained that quality leaders demonstrate value for their followers, the faculty and staff within the university setting. Mike Roberts, an institutional leader at Individual Students University (ISU) observed, “Sometimes the vision has to be autocratic, the path has to be democratic.” This demonstrates that while effective leaders may provide expectations for personnel, they also allow for the personnel to be valued as part of the change process.

A focus group participant at Student Focus University (SFU) used the following analogy to describe value at her institution:

I think it’s important to feel valued. I think that if you feel valued... that you’re willing to make that commitment or make the buy-in. We used the team reference earlier [about another focus group topic of discussion]; we want all of our team members to feel valued because maybe we have one person that is a clear leader skill-wise, and we have another person that’s farther on the end of the bench. We want both of those people and everybody in between to feel just as valued and as part of the team as everybody else. And I think that that creates a positive work environment, and it creates the buy-in and the commitment.

This means that each “team member” within the university personnel needs to have a role in which he or she feels like a valued part of the institution.

Focus group participants in this study were the self-described “worker bees” and “movers and shakers” of the universities in which they worked. When considering the process of change, some discussed ways in which they saw their voices and contributions being valued by leadership. A University of Community Achievement (UCA) focus group participant provided a specific example of a time that UCA’s provost showed value for personnel. The provost walked into a department meeting that this focus group member was attending. She explained that what happened next was “pretty amazing.” She said that the provost stayed for the meeting – that “it wasn’t just a drive by.” A focus group member at Student Focus University (SFU) suggested that leaders could show value, although this was not currently happening, by coming up with a way to follow-up with staff and faculty throughout the change process. Focus group participants described that during the planning stages of the change process that they had been invited to participate in committees and forums about the change; however, once initiatives started, some focus group members noted that there was not follow-up procedures to see how staff and faculty felt about how initiatives were progressing.

Similar comments were made by individuals at Commitment University (CU). A CU mid-level leader described that during the process of implementing new student success efforts, CU used an outside consultant; he commented, “Our consultant is so good at bringing people out, making them feel like their ideas are valued, and then bringing it all together somehow.” However, focus group participants at CU, like those at Student Focus University (SFU), explained that, “We have support, you know, it’s ‘Yeah, we support what you’re doing’ [from leadership], but then it’s also still kind of low on the priority list.” Another CU focus group participant continued this description

by adding, “You send it [the report information from work with the consultant] to the provost level, and that’s where it’s sat.” Participants at the “worker bee” or “boots on the ground” level indicated a need for follow-up at stages of the change process in addition to efforts at the beginning. They desired to have a continued feeling of value and involvement in the process.

A faculty member participant at the University of Community Achievement (UCA), Alan Grouper, also expressed the importance of what types of work is valued. He described a past leader that frequently acknowledged publically the progress that faculty at the university had made in research. However, Grouper said that UCA is a teaching institution and that that same institutional leader did not publically acknowledge quality teaching practices of faculty. He provided a specific example of this, “I remember [name], this provost I was talking about [earlier], he would never really talk much about good teaching that was done, but if somebody in [name of specific department] wrote a book, [then] everybody knew about that.” This showed that some types of achievements were valued to others; this was interesting at this institution because the values of the particular leader did not align with the institution’s teaching-focused mission which concerned the faculty participant in this research study.

However, Sophia Van Dorn, a mid-level leader at the University of Community Achievement (UCA) expressed hope for change:

And this new president, before he’s even coming, has agreed to talk to all of my staff members... and that’s a message in itself, that there’s a positive shift to happen. I think that we will have high expectations set upon us. That is really clear to me. But I’ll tell you, there is nothing

wrong with high expectations when there's a big hug behind them and that somebody cares about individuals.

Her comments echo those of other participants that leaders need to make efforts to demonstrate value for their faculty and staff personnel need to feel valued for their work.

Mid-level leaders also expressed the importance of senior leadership showing value for leaders in the middle of institutions as well as for particular initiatives and programs on campuses. A mid-level leader at the University of Community Achievement (UCA), Mary Brown, explained:

When the middle level people who are doing work that the institution values are brought to the table that signals that the institution values their work or is keeping an eye on them or whatever you want to call it.

Jim Grey, a mid-level leader at Commitment University (CU) explained that during the process of transitioning into new efforts for student success, he was frequently invited to senior leadership meetings. However, his invitations become less frequent at later stages in the process, and he commented, "I guess I would like to have a little more contact." This contact would demonstrate value for him as a staff member and also for the programs and initiatives he was working on with his staff.

A mid-level leader at the University of Transformation (UT) described an action of UT's provost that showed valued for his particular office. Frederick Crestwell indicated that the provost of UT had gone beyond providing face level support for career initiatives at UT's campus and had issued a memorandum to the university about the importance of participating or promoting the annual career fair. Crestwell indicated that this sent a "powerful message." The value that senior leadership outwardly demonstrates

for personnel and the offices in which they work all staff at all levels to feel a sense of value within the organization.

However, one mid-level leader, Mary Brown, at the University of Community Achievement (UCA) did comment about another way in which she shows value for her staff. Currently, UCA is undergoing leadership changes that have caused anxiety at various levels of the institution. In an effort to show care for her staff she indicated that she “insulates” her staff from some of the issues of senior leadership. She explained doing this in response to uncertainty and her wish to avoid her staff fearing that “not only is there no bus driver, but there’s no bus.”

These comments and actions by student-facing staff, faculty, and mid-level leadership at the institutions included in this research study demonstrate the importance of feeling valued during times of organizational change. This concept relates directly to another topic brought up by participants in regards to leadership practice, communication. Participants at the five case institutions mentioned the importance of clear communication either directly from senior leadership or facilitated by senior leadership.

The role of campus leaders, specifically senior leadership, was discussed in regards to how they facilitated or did not facilitate communication on campuses. Similar to empowering staff and faculty to collaborate, the use of committees also had general communication influences. For example, a leader at Individual Students University (ISU), John Lipsky, commented:

One of the things that came out of that [committee meeting] that we were trying to promote for next year is sort of like a “who-does-what” list. So

faculty and staff can have like “oh, this student has a questions about this or that” instead of just saying, “I don’t know.” They can look up and say, “oh, you need disability accommodations, you need to go and see [name] in the [name of student support office],” or, “you need to withdraw from a class, you need to talk to [name].” That something that everybody would think would be a good idea... That’s something that came from faculty-staff partnership.

The ISU campus can serve as a continued example when considering a faculty perspective on the same type of idea. Faculty and staff had collaborated for years on an early alert program in which faculty could complete a form about a student they had concerns about and submit it to a staff member who would then follow-up with the issue. Both faculty and staff participants expressed concerns about this practice because both sides had frustrations with what the expectations and roles should be for each side. However, a faculty commented that now, “There’s a lot to the feedback system.” Another faculty focus group participant at ISU added, “There’s a lot better feedback. Where we were before is we were doing... these reports that were going nowhere and being archived and you had these other things where we filed these reports but nothing happened.”

Some participants at Individual Students University (ISU), Commitment University (CU), the University of Community Achievement (UCA), and Student Focus University (SFU) explained that in some cases, there were not quality campus wide communication efforts. ISU can again be used as an example institution; a focus group participant at ISU commented, “I hate to say it, but number one, I think there’s just a lack

of communication across campus. There's a failure to communicate with faculty, staff, students. That's always... a struggle that I have observed." A specific example of poor communication efforts was considered by a staff focus group participant:

In my college, I don't believe [faculty] have ever really been introduced to the [new in-college student support staff] besides what I have spoken with them about. I know when the positions were created, [a consultant], the president, and deans all had a hand in that. I worked in [another office on campus] and so my former director was really assisting with the creation of these positions, but it was never announced campus wide before we came here. It was just more like "here you go."

Participants at other campuses suggested that at times leaders may not have been sending out information or sending information through channels in which it was lost or "overlooked" as one participant at CU mentioned. However, other participants said it may have been the receivers of the communication that were not reading the messages being sent by top leaders. Participants at CU, ISU, and SFU admitted that emails, especially the regular emails or the "emails of the day," were often not read by them or their colleagues. A faculty member from the University of Transformation (UT), Celeste Sampson, provided another example of how electronic communication may not always be the most effective:

A lot of the times, it's [information] is on the campus announcements, but a lot of the time, there [are] so many things up there that they're not clicking on each of those [links to pieces of information]... and I think that's one of the reasons that... it's kind of important to have... different

representatives from the departments or schools working with them [at collaborative meetings].

Beyond the communication mode, the message was also said important. Participants in this study, particularly the “boots on the ground” or “worker bees” personnel, noted that some institutional issues, happenings, or other types of information are not communicated to the levels lower on the institutional hierarchy. However, when participants did share examples of when they felt there was transparency, they indicated that this was effective communication from the leadership.

A strategy unique to the University of Transformation (UT) was that one Friday each month the president of the university had an all-faculty meeting. Rather than just having announcements being made, the president allowed for a question and answer session at the end of the meeting to invite open participation and comments. A leader within the campus, Margaret Smith, described these regular meetings as including “updates on what’s going on, what we need to do” and added that the president generally wanted to get faculty together. Participants valued this level of information sharing and transparency. In addition, Smith noted that not all faculty comments expressed agreement with senior leadership; the meeting was a place for open comments and sincere interest in communicating with the campus faculty by the president.

However, participants also discussed examples of communication not happening and staff and faculty at different level of the institution, but primarily those at the lower levels, being left “out of the loop.” A focus group participant at Commitment University (CU) commented:

Communication, I think, is always a hard thing because sometimes when you get in your office and in what you're doing, you just make assumptions that people know what you're doing I guess. And a lot of times, you don't realize that a small detail is important for people to know.

She continued by acknowledging her own role in this. She admitted that at times, she is guilty of making assumptions about what others may know and not always making sure that all staff members are aware of issues that relate to their offices.

This same level of understanding of why communication links may not be closed was expressed by another Commitment University (CU) focus group participant:

I'm sure there are things where that's happened, where it's, "Well, I'm sorry, retention can't be a priority because this has to be a priority, and this has to be a priority, and this HAS to be a priority for us to stay open." But that's not really communicated. So then you have people who are doing this work that just don't know...

This participant was interrupted by another focus group member who added, "You don't know what you don't know at that point." This example demonstrates that staff members acknowledge that there is information they are not aware of and that leaders do likely have many priorities to consider. However, this example also demonstrates that personnel would like to have issues acknowledged in university communications so they understand why there may not be follow-through in action or why this action may not occur as quickly as some personnel may expect. In considering similar situations, a focus group participant from Individual Students University (ISU) commented, "Some of them just need some follow through."

There were some examples of leadership's role in communication in the context of performance-based funding. Focus group participants who were at the student-facing level at both Student Focus University (SFU) and the University of Community Achievement (UCA) commented that they were not aware of the state-level performance funding policy. One participant at SFU commented that she looked it up before the focus group to see what it was. However, readers of this study should know that the policy was new in the participants' state.

One mid-level leader, Mary Brown from the University of Community Achievement (UCA), said:

There's been significant discussion [about performance-based funding] at the senior level within the organization, but I have not necessarily seen those performance metrics really extended down into particularly student services, student success areas.

This was confirmed by another mid-level leader at UCA, Sophia Van Dorn, when she said, "I think that performance funding is almost a secret... It's not really talked about at all." Van Dorn continued:

Without really understanding and making clear on the performance funding, then it really makes it difficult for the people that are the boots on the ground that you're understanding why decisions are being made, why people are freaking out. So there needs to be a really clear understanding. I lead areas, I mean I have people coordinating areas, but I'm the next level up, then it's the vice president – and that makes it, I don't know

about performance funding. And if I don't know, it makes me question – who knows?

This example of lack of communication indicates that although senior leadership may be addressing the implications of the new policy that mid-level and “boots on the ground” staff and faculty may have concerns if they are not aware of how the policy may affect their roles within the institution.

Participants in this research study also considered the mode and flow of communication within their universities and the role that leadership played in the mode and flow of communication of information. A senior leader at Individual Students University (ISU), Mike Roberts, acknowledged that the “least best way to communicate is email” and that he valued “quality conversations” and “getting people around the table.” This comment aligned with those made at other levels within institutional hierarchies. Participants at the five case institutions acknowledged the use of email but also expressed concern about its effectiveness in reaching colleagues and/or students. The use of email by leadership to communicate to institutional faculty and staff was described as a “broadcast” form of communication by a focus group participant at Student Focus University (SFU). In addition focus group participants at SFU and an interview participants at Commitment University (CU) and the University of Transformation (UT) acknowledged that sometimes personnel have such large volumes of email that some are only glanced at and are not actually read.

Study participants from both Student Focus University (SFU) and Commitment University (CU) mentioned the use of forums to communicate information out to the university communities. This was considered to be more effective than email because it

allowed for individuals to ask questions and feel involved in a conversation. However, with this mode, a focus group participant from SFU also noted that sometimes timing of forums makes it difficult for some personnel to attend. When commenting on this style of communication, Kent Robinson from CU, commented:

Every time he's [a hired retention consultant] here, he has an open forum with all sorts of people... [Leadership] have provided several opportunities for our consultant and [an on-campus leader] to share "here's what the data we've collected says about [Commitment University] students. So I think there've been a number of forums on that. Now, I know my colleagues, a lot of the, don't participate and they would probably still say that they don't feel informed, but I do think an effort's been made to get that information out there for people. Could new things be done that might be helpful? Sure. But I think an honest effort has been made to create opportunities for faculty.

The most frequently mentioned mode of communication when considering the university change process for student success efforts was a top-down communication chain of meetings that also allowed for backflow of information; a participant from Individual Students University (ISU) phrased this as "a little bit top down and a little bit bottom up." Similar styles of this communication chain were mentioned by participants at the other four case institutions as well. The following description by a focus group participant from ISU explains the staff communication chain:

I know our director has regular meetings with the [new student success staff members], and they [the staff in the new position] also have

communication with their deans as well. And then he has regular meetings with the provost and... regular staff meeting with us. And then he comes back and lets us know that things have been communicated and what they're working on. So it's top down and bottom to top.

The following comment by a faculty member from Commitment University (CU), Mitchell Rice, explains the faculty community chain:

I've been very fortunate with the deans I've worked with. Our dean, our past three deans, notify the chairs at our leadership team meetings, and then the chairs get the word out to faculty... The president gave it to the provost, provost gives it to the dean, dean gives it to the chairs, chairs distribute it to the faculty. He'll also talk with the chairs at the leadership team meeting about other nuances that come out of that so we're ready when faculty start asking questions. Our deans have always tried to give the chair a little heads up so that we know before the faculty find out, so they're not coming in to ask us questions that we don't know anything about.

These communication chains are parallel and mirror comments from other participants at the five institutions. Communication of changes that are university wide begin in senior leadership meetings. Then it is as if a series of concentric circles of communication radiate from this senior leadership center. This means that the attendees at the senior leadership meeting, which could include individuals with titles like dean, faculty senate representative, director, committee chair, etc., bring the information to their staffs to have

face-to-face meetings with them as well. With meetings happening on a regular basis, information can flow up or down stream.

However, participants from both Commitment University (CU) and Student Focus University (SFU) commented that this type of communication is only as strong as the links in the chain. A SFU focus group participant commented, “Some supervisors are really, really good at keeping everyone in the loop, and other supervisors are really not very good at keeping people in the loop.” A CU focus group participant echoed, “In every place, in every institution, you’re communicated with to the level at which the people above you will allow it. So... there’s always, I think everywhere you go, there’s oversights, like ‘oops, didn’t get that out to you.’”

When communication is facilitated by leadership effectively, as a focus group participant from Individual Students University (ISU) noted, then trust and value in the communication can occur. She said, “Consequently, they’ve [faculty] seen the changes. They have now seen the process work, and they’re a little more apt to report students when they see them struggling through the process.” Another focus group participant from ISU summarized her feelings about the impacts of leadership communication about student success efforts:

My sense is that campus as a whole has a better idea of what’s going on right now, why we are doing that thing. And the near-term as well as the long-term goals have been made a lot more clear to me in the last few years.

Having a leader that communicates with breadth and depth matters.

The leadership practices thus far, empowering personnel, valuing faculty and staff, and communication, relate to the final leadership concept addressed by participants in this research study; institution leaders should be a part of the student success culture. Leaders need to demonstrate that they are committed to their institutions and maintain an awareness and knowledge level that allows them to be effective leaders.

Participants explained that leadership can demonstrate commitment to student success efforts by making initiatives related to student success a priority and by being engaged in the process. The five institutions had undergone change efforts for student success, and effective leadership at the senior level and/or middle level was cited as either a propellant or a hindrance to personnel efforts. A mid-level leader at Individual Students University (ISU), John Lipsky, explained, “Everything that’s been done with this office is from the top. The president on down makes student success a priority.” He continued to explain that this engagement by senior leadership “definitely sets the tone” for campus wide efforts for student success; a president’s priority becomes the institution’s priority. This level of engagement was not found solely at ISU. Participants at the other four case institutions indicated that the initiatives for student success that included the addition of positions and/or restructuring of offices and reporting lines had been at the request of senior leadership.

Another specific leadership engagement example was found at Commitment University (CU). A focus group participant considered a specific office area and the level of engagement senior leadership was working to have with it. A focus group participant explained, “There’s been, I think, more buy-in and provost leadership in developing a more comprehensive university wide buy-in in the career mission.” This

participant continued to explain that the senior leadership was working to create a position that would allow someone with a career services focus to be “at the table” with other senior leadership. This idea that senior leadership bring in individuals to sit “at the table” if their function within the university matters was seen at other institutions as well. An individual with a title related to student success efforts was invited to be “at the table” (at least during the transition period, and some more consistently) at each of the five institutions.

Rita Murphy from the University of Community Achievement (UCA) summarized the concept of leadership engagement with student success efforts, “Ideally what we would want is a top down institutional commitment that is really embraced by the senior leadership of the institution; that’s the president, the provost, the associate provost, the academic deans, and so forth.” However, another participant from UCA, Mary Brown, did note that leadership at her institution is not always consistently focused on student success:

This leadership is showing a remarkable inconsistency in terms of how it’s treating us... I presented a plan early on [as requested by leadership], and nobody has said boo, and nobody’s told me what to do since. And I’m just doing what I’m doing. Other people have presented plans and gotten pushback [but without criteria given].

Leadership needs to consistently engage with efforts for student success and follow-up or follow-through with initiatives and practices.

Beyond showing an engaged commitment to student success efforts, participants also indicated that leadership led the student success culture by remaining aware of best

practices related to student success or surrounding themselves with those who were knowledgeable to assist with decision-making. Capacity building in regards to institutional research was mentioned by leadership at both Student Focus University (SFU), where a new institutional research office was added, and at Individual Students University (ISU), where the institutional research office was reinvented.

One interesting facet of this concept was considered by a faculty member at Commitment University (CU). Mitchell Rice explained that often times those lower in the institutional hierarchy, such as faculty, are “not the one[s] that see all the stuff that goes into it [decision-making].” This means that those lower in the organization’s hierarchy may not always know all of the perspectives needed to consider and lead to undue (at least to some degree in some situations) complaints about leadership practices. However, leaders, to remain aware of an institution’s larger picture, need to remain aware of all perspectives. A leader at Student Focus University (SFU) commented on how this is achieved at his institution. SFU leadership has a “microcosm of the intuition” at senior administration meetings. This allows for coverage of all department and office perspectives during meetings when campus discussions are had and decisions are made.

A mid-level leader at the University of Community Achievement (UCA), Sophia Van Dorn, expressed concern about the awareness level of leadership at her institution:

People [leadership] want student success, retention, but they don’t get it.

They want the numbers to be seen, but they don’t understand what is happening in between those numbers going up and the interactions that the folks have with students and how critical it is and how critical it is to shift the culture.

She continued to describe how she as a mid-level leader worked to be engaged and aware of issues within her own umbrella. She explained:

That's why I have my boots on the ground too. I don't like to micromanage; I like to be involved. So even though people will say "I'm the boss" or whatever, then if I know what's going on, then I can talk about it. But if I have a crappy relationship with people and they're not talking to me about it with me or I'm not experiencing it with them, then guess what? I don't know.

Leaders can build engagement and awareness by being involved and building knowledge about student success efforts and practices.

Some leaders who are engaged and aware may have another leadership issue to consider. Some participants addressed the scope and focus of leaders' efforts. Some expressed that they do see leaders having a desire for student success but who become too focused on a small view of the issue rather than considering the issue as a whole. A Commitment University (CU) focus group participant provided an example, "It depends on an administrator that comes in and has a pet project." The leaders come into a situation vested in a particular project, but when they leave "there's not always someone to carry that torch."

In sum, leadership matters. Participants in this research study specifically considered the important role that leaders play in empowering staff and faculty, in demonstrating value for personnel, facilitating communication, and being an engaged and aware member of the campus student success culture. However, readers should note that leadership cannot focus solely on one issue, such as performance-based funding; rather,

leaders of higher education institutions, like their personnel, are functioning in complex environments and must contend with a variety of concurrent issues. This theme is also considered.

Theme V: Complexity of Higher Education Institutions

The change process is a slow and complex development; the consideration of multiple factors or confounding issues further complicates this progression. Colleges and universities do not exist in vacuums. In addition, within institutions of higher education there are several moving parts that can add complex layers to the process of implementing any new efforts or initiatives. Participants in this research study mentioned budget concerns, enrollment issues, student experiences, and frequent leadership changes as issues that compounded the challenges of institutional change efforts.

State budget issues were mentioned by participants at three participating institutions: the University of Community Achievement (UCA), Student Focus University (SFU), and Commitment University (CU), and institutional documents from the University of Transformation (UT) demonstrated evidence of budget cuts. A focus group participant at CU mentioned a declining state budget that limited the amount of funds that could be devoted to student success programs and initiatives. Evidence from UCA, SFU, and UT pointed to budget cuts that involved reductions in personnel. Budget cuts can complicate organizational change efforts beyond not having money for specific programs. A focus group participant from SFU provided a description:

A lot of these changes [are coming] at a time when we're going through a lot of budget issues... I think that the budgets and layoffs and all of that kind of stuff has a larger impact on people's commitment and buy-in.

Like [another focus group participant] said, we're all doing a lot more work for a lot less because so many people are getting laid off. And we're taking on those extra responsibilities, and so to really kind of have that full commitment and buy-in, to be able to do a lot of those things, like get back to every student within 24 hours – we all want to do that, and sometimes it's a little bit harder because we have so much more responsibility now.

Participants at the University of Community Achievement (UCA) also made comments about the complicating role budget issues play in organizational change efforts for student success. A UCA participant mentioned that faculty members within his college who had left were not being replaced. In addition, a staff focus group participant commented, "We're feeling budget cuts from the state in regards to higher education, so it's hard to put energy and money into student initiatives to get higher attention at the state level when we're not getting state funding." Budget cuts, as demonstrated by participant comments, cause anxiety at various institutional levels, mean institutions are "doing more with less," and require additional thought when prioritizing what programs or initiatives can receive monetary support.

Participants at two institutions, the University of Transformation (UT) and the University of Community Achievement (UCA), noted falling enrollment as an issue that complicated efforts for student success. This issue relates to budgeting since lower enrollment numbers are also linked to fewer tuition dollars. Mary Brown, a mid-level leader at UCA, summarized the enrollment concern and how it relates to other institutional factors:

We're dealing with an enrollment crisis, so everything we're focused on right now is not so much "what are they doing with the funding formula" because the legislature is not going to give us enough more money to solve any financial problems... We've been flat funded for three years now, and that's the good news... We have to solve our own enrollment problems, so when everybody's focused on student persistence and student success, you know, retention and graduation rates, it's not because we want to win a performance budget battle, it's because we're hemorrhaging.

Institutions are facing increased pressures in times of reduced enrollment and reduced state funding.

In addition, participants at four of the five case institutions expressed concerns about the level of preparation many of their traditional-aged students were bringing to campus. As the focus on student success has grown across the nation (as some institutions' participants mentioned state-to-state competition), the pool of students has not necessarily changed. This means that as all institutions are working to grow enrollment and student success rates, there is a limited supply (at least when considering high schools as recruitment grounds). A participant from Commitment University (CU) explained that the "tier one" or state research institutions tend to recruit and enroll the top of high school graduating classes. Teaching-focused and regional institutions, such as those included in this research study, tend to enroll students with lower ACT or SAT scores and lower high school GPAs, those students deemed more at-risk of succeeding in college. This factor puts additional pressure on these institutions because, as the CU participant noted, they have to "bring the students further" to get them to succeed.

A faculty member, Celeste Sampson, from the University of Transformation (UT) explained, “One of my biggest arguments is they [students] come from high school [where] they showed up every day, they did some work, and that was it. And so that’s what they do when they come to class, and they just don’t know how to study the math courses.” A faculty member, Mitchell Rice, from Commitment University (CU) echoed these comments:

There have been changes in the public [high] schools and what’s required to graduate.... The rule still is you have to have four years of math to graduate high school. Well, that used to be Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, and then another class. Now it’s Algebra 1, part 1; Algebra 1, part 2; Geometry, part 1; Geometry, part 2. They’ve never even had Algebra 2. They’ve never had Trig or Pre Calc. They’re not ready for Business Calculus, but they meet the catalog prerequisites. So, we’re changing the prerequisites to give students a prep course to take Business Calc, to decrease the likelihood that they’ll fail, increase the likelihood that they’ll get through the class and into the major, and, if they do, that helps our retention.

A focus group participant from the University of Community Achievement (UCA) echoed these thoughts, “They [the high schools] don’t do a very good job of preparing students for college experiences.” This participant continued to explain not skill level but behavioral patterns such as students asking for extra credit or other “lax policies” in high schools having a negative influence on student development.

This perceived lack of preparation in high schools (which is compounded by institutions fishing deeper during recruitment) has required institutions to also consider this factor when addressing student success. Participants at both the University of Transformation (UT) and the University of Community Achievement (UCA) described the use of high school to college transition programs in which university staff went to high schools to provide services to facilitate a high school to college transition. A focus group participant from UCA commented, “There’s more pressure on higher education to dip into the high schools to ready students for college.” This is in addition to the expanding use of student success best practices which is also addressed in the themes of this research project.

Although participants from only one participating institution, the University of Community Achievement (UCA), mentioned frequent leadership changes as a complicating issue when attempting to employ efforts for student success, the comments made by participants described a situation worth considering. As other themes in this project have demonstrated, leadership matters in times of change. However, when multiple parts are moving, in this case in regards to staff covering duties because other personnel positions are vacant, more complications exist. As one participant from the UCA commented, “I think the interim leadership is so busy putting out other fires – there’s so many things going on here right now – that they’re not attending to us.” Another participation described the situation at UCA as being a “revolving door of leadership.” With rapid changes in leadership, participants acknowledged that the future was uncertain to some degree and that the “ball keeps moving.” Staff and faculty were unsure of targets to meet, what initiatives would remain, and how their role might shift

with each new adjustment to senior leadership. Frequent personnel changes complicated the discussion and implementation of student success efforts.

Theme VI: Student Success Best Practices

An institutional leader from Individual Students University (ISU), Mike Roberts, commented:

I think some of the things we're doing in performance funding are things we ought to be doing anyway. If you believe in continuous improvement and assessment, then I think you have to stay flexible and continue to be able to drive change around some of these issues. So, maybe we get rewarded in performance funding, but I know at the end of the day, we're going to be doing the right thing for students.

One expected theme, which is represented in the ISU leader's comment, when discussing student success efforts is the theme of student success best practices. Although this theme does not directly answer any of the research questions, it is important to consider what types of practices are being used during times when student success is tied to funding formulas.

Because administration, faculty, and staff were included in this study, the best practices that emerged in this theme include varying types. Best practices utilized at each of the five case institutions was addressed indirectly throughout the within-case analysis (chapter 4) and the other sections of the between-case analysis (the preceding sections of chapter 5); thus, best practices will be addressed here from a thematic perspective, focusing more on common threads rather than specific examples. The emerging concepts about best practices for student success in a four-year, small- to medium-sized, public,

primarily teaching institutions in this study included: (a) transitions, (b) tracking, (c) creating links between academic and non-academic facets of university life for students, (d) support, both academic and non-academic, and (e) teaching.

Participants at the five case institutions in this qualitative research study considered best practices for student transitions during interviews and focus group discussions. Specifically, participants discussed: (a) the transition from high school to university, (b) the transition from community college to university, and (c) the transition through and out of university life. Participants at the five institutions discussed the importance of considering where their students were transitioning from when coming into the university. One student population group that was mentioned by several participants as being significant when considering the transition into university life was the growing population of first-generation students at their universities. John Lipsky, a mid-level leader at Individual Students University (ISU) used the following analogy to provide context for discussion transitions, especially of first-generation students:

Especially with first-generation college students, they have to transition from being not on a college campus to coming to college and figuring out what it's like. I often equate it with going on a trip to a foreign country. You don't speak the language, you don't know the geography, especially if no one in your family had a college experience.

Thus, to help first-generation students as well as other university students to navigate the transition to the university and to early college experiences, the five case study institutions have utilized strategies to assist students through this navigation process.

The transitions used by the five institutions that were included in this research study were found at various stages: (a) pre-college, (b) orientation, (c) first-year, and (d) second-year. Both the University of Transformation (UT) and the University of Community Achievement (UCA) had programs in which college staff and/or students worked with high school students on building skills for college; not all of these students matriculated to UT or UCA, but some did. UT, Individual Students University (ISU), Student Focus University (SFU), and Commitment University (CU) participants highlighted the importance of their orientation programs for incoming students; these programs focused on first-time students as well as transfer students. Miles Harrison from CU explained, “At [name of the orientation program] we start to establish those expectations.” CU focus group participants mentioned one aspect of their orientation as playing a strategic role for incoming first-time students. At CU, student workers facilitate a portion of orientation. Professional staff members make sure to note the qualities of the students that are working at the orientation; participants explained that they do this to set expectations of what CU students are like in regards to their levels of success in and out of class. One CU focus group participant described it this way:

We put them [student orientation leaders] in the spotlight, and we don't exploit their success, but we highlight their success... what it means to be a successful student. Students that persist have good grades and have made an impact within our community... So, I think when students arrive on campus for the very first time, they step foot on here, they're exposed to students that have that success... and so they're learning from the first

day that they step on campus [about being successful] whether they know it or not.

UT, ISU, and CU participants discussed the use of first-year learning experience courses at their institutions in setting expectations; these courses are used to teach students about time management, study skills, career options, and other success skills necessary for university success. Similarly, participants at UCA hold freshmen seminars to address similar skills.

As previously noted, understanding the student population is important when planning transition strategies for student success. Some study participants mentioned specific transition strategies for at-risk student groups. For example, both Student Focus University (SFU) and the University of Transformation (UT) have summer bridge programs to assist targeted students in their transition to university life; in addition, UT recently added a sophomore bridge course for students who need assistance in transitioning from their first-year to their second-year of university. A participant at UT explained that students were “bottlenecking” at their sophomore year, so a bridge program between freshmen and sophomore year was created to assist identified students. She expounded, “We started it last summer, where these students [who are selected by a specific committee on campus and who] are not doing bad, but need that extra boost so that they can be better prepared once they get into their sophomore [and then] junior year.” UT also has a tiered admissions policy in which some groups are identified as needing additional support services in the early part of their college experience. Individual Students University (ISU) has something similar. Students that are considered at-risk academically upon admission are enrolled into a course that focuses on college

success skills. These students at ISU may also take a new companion course in which a credit bearing course is linked to a remedial course so that students are given the opportunity to earn university credits while still receiving needed remediation.

The second type of best practice for student success mentioned by participants in this study was the use of student tracking or monitoring students for progress. This idea links directly to the overall purpose of this research project as data is needed to be collected as part of measuring student success outcomes in performance funding policies. The case institutions in this study utilized fairly similar alert, probation, and suspension policies. Individual Students University (ISU), Commitment University (CU), Student Focus University (SFU), and the University of Transformation (UT) participants indicated using some type of grade check system for either some (i.e., only first-year, at-risk students, athletes, or students in special programs) or all students. At UT, the middle of the term grade checks, which had traditionally been completed at the mid-semester point, were now being completed in both week five and week ten of the semester. A participant described that this to provide earlier feedback with the five-week check and to provide feedback for end of the semester reactions (i.e., quick changes, course withdrawal, etc.).

One problem noted by participants in regards to midterm grade checks at multiple institutions was the confusion about if faculty are required to complete them, the level of information they are to provide, and how the staff should follow-up. Commitment University (CU) participants noted that the faculty side of this was being addressed. Jim Grey from CU explained:

An issue came up just last week at the faculty senate. Our faculty are supposed to give midterm grades to new students, students on probation, [and] students in a couple of other categories. They don't count for anything, but they appear on the database. Well, we've got an awful lot of faculty who thought that's just a suggestion and not a requirement, and there's no stick. And to make a long story short, last Thursday... the faculty senate actually approved a handbook change. And they, a number of people, so heartening to say, our students need feedback.

Besides midterm grades, early feedback for intervention can also be communicated between faculty and staff through some type of early alert system. Participants at Individual Students University (ISU), Commitment University (CU), and University of Community Achievement (UCA) mentioned such initiatives. Like midterm grades, there was confusion about when these should be completed, what level of information should be provided, who should follow-up, and how follow-up should occur. Staff participants expressed frustration at the lack of detail provided by some faculty on these forms, concern that "early" alerts were completed late in the terms, and that faculty at times did not want to participate in the follow-up actions. For example, a focus group participant at CU explained that sometimes faculty will submit an early alert form in "week 13" and "there's no early part to that anymore." Another participant followed this comment by adding that some faculty see the early alert form with the idea that "I've reported it, so I've done my job." On the other side, faculty expressed frustration about lack of follow-through on the staff end of this process. A faculty member at CU commented, "All you get is an email back copied to the student saying, 'Well, your

professor is worried about you' and a concern that you're not doing well, so go see that professor." However, institution leaders, as noted by participants, are working on opening communication lines, clarifying procedures, and even moving some of these tasks to an online format to speed the process.

Participants were able to comment on some follow-up procedures with students who were found to be struggling as a result of this tracking process. The University of Transformation (UT), Individual Students University (ISU), and Commitment University (CU) each had levels of probation and suspension and/or a "graduated suspension policy" in which students were followed through attempts to get back on track for course and degree completion. At UT, students were not allowed to register for an upcoming term until they met with a probation advisor and worked out a plan to proceed. At both ISU and CU, students whose GPAs fell to a certain point were required to take an academic success skills course as part of being allowed to readmit or remain admitted at the university. Whether the contract or course option, students at-risk academically were required to follow-through with support actions and were provided with staff guidance.

Institutions used other tracking measures as well. The University of Transformation (UT) staff tracks students who have and have not passed a required writing exit exam. The individual responsible for this works with students to ensure progress toward college graduation. At Individual Students University (ISU), staff members track students who have been out of the university and use this information to conduct a "recruit back" strategy in which students are contacted about reenrolling in the university.

The third concept to be explored in regards to the use of best practices for student success theme is the link between academic and non-academic practices. Participants at the five case institutions discussed ways in which their university faculty, staff, or faculty and staff were working to integrate academic and nonacademic activities. Learning communities, a practice of having a group of students participate in multiple courses to promote academic and socially academic engagement, were mentioned by participants at the University of Transformation (UT), Commitment University (CU), the University of Community Achievement (UCA), and Individual Students University (ISU). Specifically, participants at CU explained that a current initiative in the work was to develop new learning communities in which they could get “more bang for their buck” by targeting more at-risk students; however, this process was noted to be a balancing act as the university leaders did not want the programs to be seen as only for those student populations at a disadvantage and to create a negative stigma associated with learning communities.

Although use of learning communities was the practice most cited by participants in this study as an approach to linking the academic and nonacademic, it was not the only method addressed. Leadership at Student Focus University (SFU) has considered the possibility of creating online cohorts for targeted programs. They are doing this because they noticed that programs with cohort models have higher student success outcomes and they wanted to come up with a way to move this practice to use in the online platform. Brian Green, a leader at SFU, expounded:

We rolled out a few other initiatives as well. There is kind of a virtual cohort we've been trying to get folks excited about or at least interested

in... [If] you think about a [name of other program that already has a cohort model in a face-to-face setting], when they're done, you can see the bond that group feels. [It's] hard to do that online... We're still working on the details ...but the idea is that – so let's say that about 20 students... you can be part of this virtual cohort... You can imagine that the discussion boards will be a little more enriching if they have the same group of people.

In addition, both the University of Transformation (UT) and Commitment University (CU) use undergraduate research programs to engage students. The University of Community Achievement (UCA) was working toward increasing community partnerships to increase service-learning and internship experiences for students. In addition, ISU staff, in planning for their next orientation program, have been reorganizing the events included so that students are introduced to academic skills and college life expectations earlier in their college career.

Providing students with support was mentioned frequently by participants at the five institutions. In addition, many of them stressed that with the college students of today, academic support alone is not enough; today's students need personal support as well. Students' lives outside of the classroom impact their success in the classroom. As Mike Roberts from Individual Students University (ISU) exemplified:

The overwhelming number of students who ended up in an academic recovery class were not there because of an academic skill loss. It was everything else under the sun. It was family circumstances, divorces, minor children and daycare, an illness, loss of a spouse, losing a job.

This makes it important for readers to understand that the academic, personal, and general support systems in place at the five case institutions are part of their best practices.

The most frequently mentioned support system considered by participants at the five institutions was advising; however, institutions did not approach their advising models in the same way. Each advising model was unique, like the institutions themselves. Commitment University (CU) personnel were in the process of having discussions about what their advising model might look and feel like; however, it was noted that each college within the university was different, so these practices may need to be flexible. Individual Students University (ISU) was in the midst of transitioning to a new model; for students' first three semesters at ISU, they would have a professional advisor, and then at their fourth semester, they would transition to a faculty advisor. This would allow them the special care of a professional advisor in transitioning to university life in their early semesters. At Student Focus University (SFU), the advising process was left primarily to the faculty but with professional advisors used to facilitate the registration process; in addition, because of the student population, the staff at SFU frequently organized advising events where faculty would advise and staff would provide a social incentive to attend (food). The University of Community Achievement (UCA) personnel had piloted a dual advising model that staff participants hoped would be expanded across the university; in this model, each student had two advisors, a professional advisor for assistance in the university navigation process and a faculty advisor for mentoring. Participants at the University of Transformation (UT) described their advising model as "holistic," or a process in which the student was addressed as a

whole individual by working with both faculty and staff. In addition, participants at both CU and UCA noted that how advising is assessed in faculty evaluations or tenure processes has also been discussed because it may play a role in the quality of faculty advising seen on campuses.

The host of other support strategies varied among the five case universities. However, the common thread in of those discussed was summarized by Brian Green, a leader at Student Focus University (SFU), was that staff and faculty needed to meet students where they were in regards to both ability level and physical location. In regards to ability level, the types of support, beyond advising, mentioned by participants included tutoring. The location of tutoring services varied across campuses. Individual Students University (ISU), SFU, and the University of Transformation (UT) were at differing levels of discussing, implementing, or already using embedded tutoring practices. ISU was in the planning stages of having a formal supplemental instruction program. SFU already had peer tutors attend classes and then offer optional tutoring sessions outside of classes. UT had had discussions about similar practices. Physically, tutors have begun to shift locations as well. At SFU, the writing lab had been moved and the math lab may be moved into the library to have a learning commons feel. At CU, discussions have been had to hold tutoring sessions in the residence hall lounges. A CU focus group participant explained:

Another program we're trying to get started is to put the [name of tutoring services program] in the lounges in the res halls... Because a lot of students, especially the freshmen, aren't comfortable enough to go out and seek help. But if they're working with somebody who's already in their

res halls, we're hoping they will be more likely to reach out and go and get some help.

However, students navigate more than the physical campus, so some tutoring programs are now being facilitated online. Student Focus University (SFU) offered some tutoring services online and was working to expand this service; Brian Green explained, "They [the university system] created an online English writing tutor program, and they're developing a math one as well." Commitment University (CU) was using a private company to offer online tutoring in various subjects and received regular reports on the frequency and discipline of student access to this service.

Other programs discussed by participants in this multiple-case study involved the embedding of personal support services into classes. For example, Student Focus University (SFU) was planning to embed class stewards into online classes. These individuals would serve as conduits to navigate the university or classes online with support; these stewards would assist with questions about where to submit assignments or where to find digital campus resources. An institutional leader described the purpose as to facilitate communication.

At the University of Transformation (UT) peer mentors were embedded into first-year experience courses and at Commitment University (CU) peer instructors were embedded into first-year experience courses. Although their titles are different, the roles of these student employees are similar; they are to serve as role models and support systems for first-year students. Since the UT student workers are mentors, they do engage in other support activities with their mentees. A focus group participant from UT described the peer mentor program process:

Mentors are basically in the position [to] serve our freshmen students. They are assigned to our [name of first-year experience course] classes. They go into [the class] every other week [and] conduct a 30-minute session that is in line with the topic for [the class] that week. They are assigned mentees in that class, so once they conduct that activity, they then take some time to meet with their mentees and to continue to establish that rapport with them... just trying to help them transition on throughout this first year.

Another focus group participant added that because of the design of the peer mentor program, as being linked to the first-year experience course, that this mean that all freshmen had access to a peer mentor. Beyond embedded tutors, often times at CU the course instructor is also the advisor to the students in the class. This creates another layer of support because students, according to participants, develop more comfortable relationships with their advisors.

Although best practices of teaching were not mentioned in regards to specific curriculum, lesson, or activity planning, the idea that best practices of teaching needed to exist to facilitate student success was mentioned. Some participants, both faculty and staff, expressed concern that not all faculty members design courses and daily activities in ways that today's students will engage with course materials. Celeste Sampson, a faculty member at the University of Transformation (UT) described:

I think as a whole it would be great for it [student success] to be a university wide, faculty and staff hand in hand working on this effort... As I gave a presentation to my math department... early in the semester, I

said, “Okay, we can continue doing the things as we’ve done them before. But if we don’t have students, what kind of a job do you have?” You know, a university without its students, it’s nothing. “You won’t have a job, so think out of the box and do things a little bit differently... and just keep these things in mind.”

The current use of or plan to develop offices on campus dedicated to quality university teaching was mentioned by some participants. For example, Mike Roberts from Individual Students University (ISU) said that they were in the process of creating a center for teaching and learning; in this center, faculty would have access to professional development to “understand the changing pedagogy.” In addition, the importance of faculty engaging with their peers to discuss teaching practices and having time to develop quality curriculum, especially online curriculums, was also discussed. Some faculty participants felt as though time was lacking to truly delve into the consistent utilization of best teaching practices online.

Summary

Six themes emerged from this study: (1) institutional role in a higher education system, (2) need for meaningful data, (3) efficiency and effectiveness, (4) role of leadership during change, (5) complexity of institutions, and (6) best practices for student success. Each of these themes allows for the consideration of the central research purpose, which was to explore organizational change occurring during a time of transition into the use of state accountability measures, or other emergent themes related to change in higher education institutions. The next chapter (chapter 6) provides a discussion of these themes and the implications for practice and future research.

Chapter 6

Discussion

As calls for accountability in education become increasingly tied to funding and the use of intermediate and outcome performance metrics, understanding the links between institutional organization and practices is likely to become more important for a variety of stakeholders in higher education to understand. Specifically, performance-based funding is currently described as a “widespread phenomenon” and is expected to continue to spread (Dougherty & Natow, 2015, p. 186). This makes the discussion of performance accountability measures as they relate to the use of student success outcomes measures and institutional efforts to increase performance on these measures important for a wide range of audiences, including higher education researchers, higher education institution leadership, and higher education policymakers. Specifically, the discussion of the findings of this research project will address the following: (a) comparing findings of this research study to previous studies concerning performance-based funding, organizational change and leadership, and student success; (b) study limitations; (c) recommendations for higher education institutional leaders and policymakers; and (d) needed future research.

Connections to Previous Research

This research has links to previous research directly focused on the study of performance-based funding, research that has considered organizational change and leadership, and research that addressed best practices for student success. For the purpose of this discussion, this current research project is discussed in terms of each of these threads of previous research.

Performance-Based Funding

Previous research on performance-based funding demonstrated the importance of understanding the state and higher education system contexts when considering performance funding policies (Banta et al., 1996; Dougherty & Natow, 2015; Dougherty et al., 2010; Dougherty & Reddy, 2011; Heller, 2004; McLendon & Hearn, 2013) and mixed reviews in regards to direct links to student success outcomes (Baxter, Brant, & Forster, 2007; Bogue & Johnson, 2010; Burke & Modarresi, 2000; Cavanaugh & Garland, 2012; Sanford & Hunter, 2011; Shin, 2010). This current research study has links to each of these two avenues of research.

Institutions included in this study were four-year, small- to medium-sized public institutions with a strong focus on teaching. Although each institution varies in the degree to which it could be considered “open access,” these institutions do have higher populations of students who have more college success risk factors than students attending some of the larger research institutions that tend to have more selective admissions standards. Larger research institutions, according to participants in this study, also tend to have more representation in state legislature settings. The findings of this study echo the importance of understanding state contexts when addressing performance funding policies in research. Several participants indicated that in the years leading up to the implementation of performance funding, the needs of their type of institution (the teaching-focused or regional institution) had not been met with legislative support. Institutions indicated that state funding appropriations historically tended to favor larger research institutions.

Of the three states included in this study, one had a performance funding 1.0 (PF 1.0) policy and two had performance funding 2.0 (PF 2.0) policies. Under the PF 1.0 system, enrollment continued to influence state funding allocations; contributing institution participants from this state indicated that a misaligned balance (from their teaching institution perspective) still existed in the funding formula. This is likely because, as a few participants acknowledged, enrollment funding tends to favor institutions that have an easier time recruiting quality students. However, participants in the two states with PF 2.0 policies indicated that their institutional purposes were favored, as least as policies were initially written, because of the outcomes-based funding. As evidenced by a summary of performance funding indicators, the use of metrics for funding purposes tended to include a focus on student retention and graduation rates with a particular emphasis on students who are considered at-risk (e.g., Pell students, adult learners, community college transfer students, students with low ACT/SAT scores, etc.) and students enrolled in STEM, health, or other fields considered of high priority based on state economic needs. These students, those who are at-risk and many who are enrolled in career-focused science fields (such as nursing), tended to be attending the teaching focused institutions. That means these new funding formulas that tie in student success outcomes of at-risk student groups and STEM career fields benefit the regional comprehensive rather than the research institutions. (Although, readers should note that other performance metrics for funding are linked to institutional research.)

Specifically, institutional leaders at two participating institutions indicated that the current formats of their state performance funding policies may favor successes in

teaching institutions, especially those enrolling larger numbers of at-risk student groups, over research institutions. However, participants also indicated a concern that as adjustments are made to the funding policies that the favor may once again turn to research institutions who have historically had more representation politically within states. This concern is important to understand since, as policies are written, states are demonstrating a focus on the needs of at-risk students and careers in science and technology. In various political arenas, including the national focus on higher education, these have also been touted as a current focus of interest. However, participants are concerned that politics may “trump” priority with a reshifting of funding metrics toward research institutions.

As noted, the findings of this study add to the discussion of the effectiveness of performance funding policies on student outcomes such as retention and graduation rates. Previous research had considered the process of designing and implementing a performance funding policy with a focus on state higher education leadership and had also considered impacts of policy on student outcomes. However, these avenues of research had left a gap in regards to the actual shifts and efforts being made within institutions to meet the state performance metrics. Findings in this study have begun to fill this gap.

Specifically, the findings of this study identified the role that leadership and best practices for student success, both of which are addressed in this discussion, play important roles in facilitating the change process for student success efforts. What is important to note from the research findings is that there are several moving parts in this change process. When considering communication of institutional change alone, the

findings in this study demonstrated a series of modes of communications with varying levels of effectiveness and communication chains that needed time within the change process to allow for ebbing and flowing of communication about initiatives up and down the institutional hierarchy. What these types of findings indicate is that change takes time.

Previous research had indicated that some states abandoned performance funding policies after short periods of time (Dougherty & Natow, 2015; Dougherty et al., 2010). From the perspective of these studies, this did not allow the effects of performance funding policies to surface before policy abandonment. Findings from this study corroborate this concept. Internally, colleges and universities have many moving parts. When a shift is expected to occur throughout an entire institution, this change process takes time to assess for what changes are needed, to communicate change, to pilot efforts, to make adjustments, and to garner internal support. Each of these concepts was considered as part of the findings of this research study. What these findings mean within the context of research on performance funding is that consideration of what occurs internally in institutions during the change process is important to increase efforts for student success and focus on specific state priorities as determined by state metrics.

Organizational Change and Leadership

Findings from this study confirm the important role that leaders play during times of institutional change. Previous research indicated a growing conversation about the role that institutional leadership plays during times of institutional change, whether or not the changes are a result of the implementation of a new performance-based funding policy. For example, previous research indicated that change needs to be understood in

context, specifically considering change type and change participants as these factors relate to both leadership and change practices (Hickman, 2010; Kezar, 2014). In addition, other research considered the process of change when an outside environmental factor, such as a change in funding policy, is inciting the change to occur. For example, different paradigms or models have been used to consider change in different contexts, including change in the context of both policy shifts (Gumport, 2012; Kezar, 2012) and in times of financial concern (Kuh et al., 2011). Specifically, institutional features such as mission, collaboration, sense of priority, and external pressures have been found to play a role in the organization change process in higher education (Kezar, 2006).

Findings from study add to this conversation on organizational change and leadership by confirming that institutional factors such as mission, personnel, collaboration, and using data for decisions are all features of the institutional change process. Leaders can facilitate change by utilizing these features to the benefit of the change process and by aligning campus features to improve for external criteria. One of the highlights of this research study was the importance of collaboration and use of data. Kuh et al. (2011) had explained that in times of financial constraint that these are often features highlighted in change processes. Findings of this study echo that conclusion. When budgets are linked to performance, institutions must move toward use of data for decisions and the use of collaboration. All institutions in this study had been using data as part of their institutional practices, but the findings of this study indicated that the quality of data being used for decisions matter. As a result institutions in this study were building intuitional capacity for data collection and analysis and/or looking to outside

data products or consultants for specialized data collection and analysis to ensure that meaningful changes for student success outcomes were made.

Findings of this study also demonstrated that collaboration was key to the change process. Collaboration allowed for a few important elements of the change process to be addressed. First, collaboration allowed leaders to make efforts for student success more holistic and targeted. With resources scarce, efforts for student success needed to be facilitated in a consistent and collaborative manner across institutions to allow for change to be meaningful and economic. Mid-level leaders particularly noted the need to utilize their campus networks of other leaders, faculty, and staff to make initiatives and programs happen on campus within a constrained budget. To facilitate efforts for student success, mid-level leaders collaborated with others to share personnel, time, and financial resources. In addition, collaboration assisted in the buy-in of student success efforts. Many participants described the organization of their institutions as being “silos.” Institutions are divided along the lines of academic affairs and student affairs, along the lines of upper level administration and lower level personnel, along the lines of varying colleges and departments, and along the lines of faculty and staff. With collaboration necessary for budgeting reasons, this caused more discussions across the dividing lines. These conversations led to an understanding of various perspectives. Academic affairs and student affairs could renew their value in understanding what happens in the different arenas of universities. The student-facing faculty and staff could better see that decisions, especially those regarding cuts, had several factors at a play that top administration needed to consider. Faculty could understand the process of student support staff. Faculty in different departments could learn from and collaborate with

those in other academic departments. Staff could understand what was happening in classrooms. However, these perspective changes had not occurred in all participants, but beginning conversations were apparent.

Student Success

Best practices for how to help students navigate and complete college has been considered in higher education literature over the years. Student engagement (Kuh, 2003, 2009), student involvement in both academic and nonacademic campus life (Astin 1985; 1999), student characteristics as they relate to departure or persistence, (Bean 1981, 2005; Bean & Eaton, 1995), and students' interactions or connections with campuses and this relationship to student departure or persistence (Tinto 1975, 1993) have all been considered. In addition, each of these theories has been considered in regards to specific institutional practices such as active learning (Braxton et al., 2008), student learning (Barber, 2012), advising (Miller, 2010), student support (Kelley-Hall, 2010), bridge programs (Arena, 2013), and other campus programs designed to allow students to build connections (Chatriand, 2012).

The work of Tinto has long been considered the standard when considering the institution's role in student departure or persistence decisions (Braxton, 2003). This progression of research led Tinto (2012) to develop a framework for institutional action that could promote student success outcomes. This framework included a focus on setting expectations for students, providing students with support, providing students with assessment and early feedback, and getting students involved on campus. Each of the elements of Tinto's framework for institutional actions related to student success was confirmed by themes represented in this study. What this study adds to this conversation

on student success research is how these elements occur when funding is the impetus for action.

Institutions included in this study echoed Tinto's (2012) framework. They were working to set expectations for students in regards to classroom actions as well as general college expectations. What is worth noting about this study is the timing of when expectations were set. Two institutions has programs that allowed for outreach to high schools to students who would soon be transitioning to college life in understanding what college would be like and what their responsibilities would be. In addition, besides setting expectations for tasks specifically related to academics, institutions made efforts and built in time to show new students what successful college students looked like in and out of the classroom. Some institutions included the use of peer staff at orientation, and others used peer mentors. The role of these peers was to demonstrate a balanced focus on academics and personal growth in college.

In addition, Tinto's (2012) framework included support. This feature was being implemented at the five case institutions. Participants in this study explained a growing importance of building both academic and personal support into the university experience. When students depart college, it is not always because of academic reasons. Students are complex individuals with many influences in their lives residing both on and off campus. Specifically, participants in this study cited advising and early alert processes as vital to monitoring and assisting students with academic and holistic progress during their experience. The student populations on college campuses are changing – to have more nontraditional students, more first-generation students, and more students with success risk factors. This change, as study participants noted, is more

easily seen at regional universities than it is at research universities. This means it is especially important to understand the element of support, both academic and personal, in Tinto's framework at these institutions.

Additionally, in his framework, Tinto (2012) highlighted the importance of assessment and feedback as well as involvement. With the impetus of performance funding, institutions have built or have begun to build institutional capacity for data collection and use. Some of this data involves student assessment of engagement outside of class. In addition, institutions are monitoring course completion rates and student GPA to consider ways for institution level involvement. At the student level, institutions are working to encourage or require early feedback on academic progress through grade checks.

This study also highlighted the role that transitions play in student success efforts. Students need a clear path from entrance to graduation. Students are guided along this path by faculty and staff who play a vital role in explaining university policies and procedures which may seem confusing and daunting to outsiders. As participants explained, the student population at teaching focused institutions is changing. More students have less context for higher education experiences. As a result, institutions in this multiple case study were considering how to focus on benchmarks in student success. Institutions needed to ensure that students were provided with roadmaps for college early in their college experiences and to monitor progress toward degree completion along the way so that support, whether it be an academic support such as tutoring or personal support such as mentoring or a counseling recommendation, could be provided if and when it was needed.

Study Limitations

All research has limitations; the limitations of this study will be addressed in regards to the methodology used as well as the role that participant perceptions played. First, this study was a qualitative research project. Although qualitative methods were the most ideal because institutional efforts for student success in states with performance funding was an area that demanded exploring, there are still limits to this approach. Qualitative research findings cannot be generalized. Findings of this study can only truly represent the experiences and perspectives of the 26 interview participants and participants in 10 focus groups across five institutions in three states. Because of the institution types that were represented, this study also reflects only institutions with teaching as a high priority. Although, institutions did include some levels of variance, as two were considered to have historical connections to serving underrepresented populations in higher education and one had a large focus on adult learners. This meant that viewpoints from other institution types and other states could not be represented in the findings of this study.

This study was also limited by the individual participants. A purpose of this study was to explore the change process from the perspective from the mid-level and student-facing organization members. Although, because of organizational size, the study needed to be expanded to include some senior leadership at a few of the institutions. This was done to accommodate institutions. Contacts indicated that their institutions had somewhat “flat” organization. Based on the research questions of this study, top leadership would need to be included to accurately get a picture of the institution. Although this added scope to some cases, this may have also limited findings from other

institutions in regards to providing consistent findings. In addition, no faculty members chose to participate at one of the five case institutions; this may have limited findings at that particular institution. Beyond who was represented from each institution, this study has limitations because findings were reliant on participant perspective. Although I conducted multiple interviews and focus groups as part of this study to provide validation of findings, I am still limited in the degree to which participants provided honest and accurate information about their experiences and events at their institutions. In addition, this study is limited because participants who had an interest in student success were more likely to give their time to the research project and contribute as interview or focus group participants. It is not likely that staff and faculty who were less interested in efforts for student success would have responded to invitations to participate in the study; this means these voices may not have been included.

Recommendations for Practice

Findings from this research project have implications for the practice of both institution level leaders as well as state higher education policymakers. Previous research on the development and impacts of performance-based funding had mostly focused on senior institution and state leadership as well as the outcomes themselves, this study, like part of a recent research study conducted by Dougherty and Natow (2015) focused on the middle levels of higher education institutions. This added viewpoint provides additional perspectives to consider when developing actions for change.

Institutional Leadership

Institution leaders may want to consider various elements when making changes for student success efforts. Institutions need to ensure that meaningful data is being

collected and utilized. When funding is tied to performance, the “shotgun” approach to student success initiatives may not be the most economical way of addressing student outcomes. Participants at some institutions admitted that their institutions were “throwing” a series of initiatives at the issue and “hoping that something would stick.” Although this plan may prove effective, it is not efficient. Efforts need to be targeted. In addition, institution leaders need to realize that not all methods will work at all institutions and that not all strategies will work with all students. Some participants indicated a concern that the consulting firms hired by institution leaders were suggesting the use of “canned” best practices that may only work on typical students at more traditional institutions. Leaders need to use data to consider which strategies work best for the student population at their particular institution. The use of retention consultants can be useful, as some participants in this study indicated, when balanced with consideration of specific goals for specific student populations and with the consideration of strengths and needs of institution personnel who will implement the initiatives.

In addition, although the “shotgun” approach is not recommended, the use of multiple student success strategies is. Not all students are the same, and universities have diverse students represented at their campuses. In addition, diversity is no longer simply about race, gender, and other general demographics. College and university students today are diverse in their economic status, age, enrollment status, family circumstances, preferred modality of instruction, etc. This means that some student success strategies or programs will need to be targeted at certain population groups. However, leaders should take caution to ensure that some strategies are not seen as being for the “disadvantaged” and creating a negative stereotype of certain success strategies.

Beyond considering students, institutional leaders also need to consider university personnel when developing and implementing student success initiatives. Participants in this study demonstrated varying degrees of being informed about changes and involvement in the change process. To garner institutional level support and, ultimately, to create a cultural focus on student success, institution leaders need to attain buy-in from personnel. The kinds of environmental desires expressed by faculty and student-facing staff at the participating institutions mirrored the framework that Tinto (2012) created for student success. Tinto's framework had four elements: (a) setting expectations, (b) providing support, (c) providing assessment and feedback, and (d) encouraging involvement. Although university personnel, depending on their position, may not need to know the specific way in which institution funding is calculated, they need to know what is expected of them as university staff and faculty. Staff and faculty need to know what is happening and what expectations leaders will have of them because of state, system, or institution changes.

Faculty and staff also expressed interest in assessment and feedback, another of the elements in Tinto's (2012) framework, as it relates to their role in the institution's efforts. Staff and faculty members' roles are becoming more reliant on data to show progress. Although they may not need the same level of data as senior leadership, faculty and staff do need to know if and how their roles are relating to institutional and student progress. Participants in this study also expressed a desire to feel supported and valued in the change process. Faculty specifically said there was a need for increased professional development on best teaching practices that they could and should be using with the students in their classes. Faculty also stressed the importance of development for

understanding how to use these practices in different modalities as the use of online classes is growing. Finally, participants indicated a need to be involved with the change process. They expressed concern when not informed about or included in the process. Faculty and staff need to feel valued. Institution leaders can facilitate this utilizing focus groups, forums, committees, and by being, as leaders, involved in campus conversations about change.

Another recommendation for institution level leaders is to be advocates for their institutions. Many states have, at least for the time being, prioritized the types of functions occurring at teaching focused institutions. Leaders at these institutions can use this focus as a platform from which to demonstrate the value and importance that their institutions have within a state system of higher education. Higher education institutions in the United States are diverse, and this diversity in institution type and mission allows college-going students to have a choice in attending an institution type that suits their needs. Not all student needs can be successful at one particular institution type. As leaders for their institutions, senior campus administration can serve as advocates for the important roles that different institutions play.

State Policymakers

Policymakers have different perspectives than those of leaders of particular institutions since their roles require them to consider higher education from system and state perspectives. However, this study has highlighted the importance of understanding the diverse roles that different institution types play within state systems of higher education. Although some institutions, particularly large research institutions, may serve a larger number of students, they do not always represent a picture of a state's population

demographic. To truly represent all citizens of a state, policymakers need to know who is attending which types of institutions and to make decisions that align with this awareness.

In addition, when policymakers understand who is attending certain institution types, they need to understand that different institutions may have further to bring students to assist them in achieving the same level of skill attainment. This may mean that certain institution types may need more or different resources than others in order to ensure institutional and student success outcomes. State policymakers should demonstrate an awareness of their role in propelling or hindering attainment of resources necessary to produce desired state results.

Future Research

Additional research is also necessary in this area of study. First, few studies have considered the middle levels of higher education organizations in relation to institutional efforts under state performance-based funding policies. Dougherty and Natow's (2015) is a notable exception. Mid-level and student-facing faculty and staff tend to have little, or at least not specific, knowledge about state performance funding policies. This makes research in this area challenging but important. As more states transition to the use of performance funding, more will need to be known about this transition process, especially from the perspectives of the "worker bees" or those who have their "boots on the ground." Additional qualitative research in this area can lead to future quantitative and generalizable research in describing and analyzing the link between how these processes occur and student outcomes such as retention and graduation rates.

In addition, future research is also needed to explore some of the features of change at institutions in performance funding states that were mentioned by participants

in this study more frequently or as being more important than other features. Specifically, the relationship between faculty and staff collaboration and student success measures should be considered in future studies. A better understanding of this relationship could be obtained. In addition, this could allow for better collaborative efforts to be made in more purposeful ways, increasing levels of efficiency and effectiveness for student success efforts. In addition, although research has been conducted on the use of specific best practices, these practices can be researched with an emphasis on context. Researchers can consider the relationship of students being involved in multiple success strategies and this impact on their attainment of success measures.

Conclusion

These recommendations for practitioners and for future research are presented in a hope that as funding formulas for higher education continue to be more strongly linked to student success, that student success proves to be more valued. Although formulas are based on numbers, students are still individuals and remain at the core of this accountability system. Institutions and states should be looking for win-win-win situations in which students find personal improvement, institutions find value in their roles, and states experience increased prosperity and increased involvement from citizens. Higher education can bring these outcomes to fruition if leaders within state higher education systems continue to focus on ways to serve students efficiently and effectively.

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Appendix A
Interview Protocols

Interview Protocol

Date _____ Pseudonym _____

Introduction

- Introduce yourself
- Discuss the purpose of the study
- Provide informed consent
- Provide structure of the interview (audio recording, taking notes)
- Ask if they have questions
- If they provide consent, begin interview

Interview Questions

1. Describe what you see as the purposes, goals, and/or mission of your institution.
2. Have state performance funding policies influenced these (Q1 purposes, goals, and/or mission)? If so, to what extent?
3. Since the introduction of state accountability measures through performance funding have been initiated, what changes have you seen on your campus? Who has initiated these changes? Who is involved in the planning? How are the changes made?
4. How would you categorize the initiatives/changes/student success measures on your campus? For example, are the changes directives from administration? Are the changes coming from student affairs professionals? Campus faculty? Multiple initiatives? Which initiatives and individuals involved are likely to have the most impact? Explain.
5. Tell me about student success on your campus. Who is involved? What programs, policies, and/or procedures exist that influence student success initiatives?
6. How are student success initiatives developed? Who is involved in the planning? How are initiatives communicated throughout the campus? How is buy-in and/or compliance with initiatives achieved?
7. What do you think will be the long-term effects of performance funding on your institution? Who is affected the most in regards to job function? Which new functions will still be visible in 5 years? 10 years? Why will these be the longest lasting? Who will ensure they last?
8. What else would you like to tell me about performance funding and/or student success efforts on your campus?

Conclusion

- Remind them about the follow-up email once the transcript is complete
- Thank them for participation
- Once in a private location, jot down initial thoughts about the interview

Appendix B

Focus Group Protocols

Focus Group Protocol

Date _____ Number of participants in group _____

Introduction

- Introduce yourself
- Discuss the purpose of the study
- Provide informed consent
- Provide structure of the focus group (audio recording, taking notes)
- Ask if they have questions
- If they provide consent, begin focus group

Focus Group Questions

Topic 1: Student Success Goals

1. What do you see as the main purpose/mission for your institution? How does this relate to the state performance funding policies?

Topic 2: Communication

2. How has information regarding performance funding metrics and/or student success efforts been communicated on your campus?
3. What efforts have institutional leaders made to have a campus-wide focus on performance metrics and/or student success?

Topic 3: Commitment and/or Buy-in

4. Who is involved in campus efforts related to the performance metrics and/or student success? Have any changes been made in duty functions for administrators, faculty, or staff?
5. Do you think all campus faculty and staff are committed to institutional performance and student success? Explain.

Topic 4: Changes/Policy Effects

6. How long do you think your state will have performance funding? What success initiatives will last whether or not the policy remains?
7. What initiatives are not likely to work and/or are likely to not still be around within a few years?

Conclusion

- Review researcher notes with the group (member checking)
- Thank them for participation
- Once in a private location, jot down initial thoughts about the focus group

Appendix C

IRB Approval Letter



December 3, 2014

Lindsay Wayt
Department of Educational Administration

Barbara LaCost
Department of Educational Administration
127 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20141214774 EX
Project ID: 14774
Project Title: Pathways to Student Success: A Multiple Case Study on Four-Year
Colleges' Organizational Change in Performance Funding States

Dear Lindsay:

This letter is to officially notify you of the conditional 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 Exemption Determination: 12/03/2014.

1. Your stamped and approved informed consent documents have been uploaded to NUgrant (files with Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use these documents to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent documents, please submit the revised documents to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.
2. Once institutions are identified, you will need to obtain permission to conduct the research at the site. If the institution has an IRB, you will need to ask if they would require IRB approval at their institution. For documentation of approval, you will need to submit institutional approvals which would be the IRB determination and/or departmental approval to UNL's IRB. Once you have submitted at least 1 permission letter, you will receive final approval for your research. The letters can be submitted on a case by case basis as they are received.

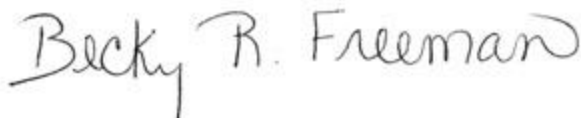
We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- * 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



Appendix D

Interview Informed Consent Document



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Educational Administration

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title:

Pathways to Student Success: A Multiple Case Study on Four-Year Colleges' Organizational Change in Performance Funding States

Purpose:

The researcher is interested in exploring and describing the organizational changes that are occurring at small- to medium-sized, four-year public institutions during a transition into the use of state performance accountability measures.

Procedures:

You will be asked to respond to questions concerning your experiences with institutional efforts regarding student success, your experiences with state performance funding metrics, and organizational innovations and changes focused on student success and other state performance measures. The researcher will record and transcribe the interview in order to analyze the responses. The interview should last approximately one hour and will be conducted in a mutually agreed upon location. Once the interview transcript has been completed, the researcher will send an electronic copy of this document to you for your review.

Benefits:

There are no direct benefits to you. You may use this opportunity to reflect on your practice.

Risks and/or Discomforts:

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Confidentiality:

Information obtained during this study that may identify you or your institution will be kept confidential. If you accept this agreement, no data will be associated with you or your institution. The researcher will audio record interviews and will transcribe the interviews upon completion. After transcription, the researcher will destroy the audio recordings. Data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office and on a password protected personal computer. Data will be seen only by the researcher during the study. Data will be kept for two years after the study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings, but the research will be reported using pseudonyms for institutions and individual participants and as aggregated data. No names will be used.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:

You may ask the investigator questions about this research and have those questions answered before you agree to participate in the study. You may also contact the investigator's faculty



advisor in the Department of Educational Administration, Dr. Barbara LaCost, via phone at (402) 472-0988 or email at blacost1@unl.edu with questions. You may contact the investigator at the phone number and email address listed below. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 to voice concerns about the research or if you have questions about your rights as a research participant.

Freedom to Withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researcher, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, your institution, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this 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 form to keep.

Audio Recording:

You are voluntarily making a decision on whether or not to have this interview audio recorded. The audio recording will be destroyed upon completion of the interview transcripts and completion of research project. Please indicate if you consent to allow for an audio recording to be made of the interview proceedings.

- Yes, I consent to have this interview audio recorded.
 No, I do not consent to have this interview audio recorded.

Signature of Participant:

 Signature of Research Participant

 Date

Name and Contact Information of Investigator:

Lindsay Wayt, M.A. Phone: (402) 960-6380 Email: lwayt2@unl.edu

Appendix E

Focus Group Informed Consent Document



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Educational Administration

INFORMED CONSENT FORM – FOCUS GROUP

Title:

Pathways to Student Success: A Multiple Case Study on Four-Year Colleges' Organizational Change in Performance Funding States

Purpose:

The researcher is interested in exploring and describing the organizational changes that are occurring at small- to medium-sized, four-year public institutions during a transition into the use of state performance accountability measures.

Procedures:

You will be asked to respond to questions concerning your experiences with institutional efforts regarding student success, your experiences with state performance funding metrics, and organizational innovations and changes focused on student success and other state performance measures. The researcher will record and transcribe the focus group discussion in order to analyze the responses. The focus group process should last approximately one hour and will be conducted in a mutually agreed upon location. Focus group participants will be asked to review the general notes taken by the researcher during the focus group at the end of the focus group meeting.

Benefits:

There are no direct benefits to you. You may use this opportunity to reflect on your practice.

Risks and/or Discomforts:

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Confidentiality:

Information obtained during this study that may identify you or your institution will be kept confidential. If you accept this agreement, no data will be associated with you or your institution. Focus group participants should be aware that while the researcher will request that all focus group discussion content remain within the confines of the focus group meeting, the researcher cannot guarantee that other focus group participants will comply with this request in keeping all information confidential. The researcher will audio record the focus group and will transcribe the interviews upon completion. After transcription, the researcher will destroy the audio recordings. Data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office and on a password protected personal computer. Data will be seen only by the researcher during the study. Data will be kept for two years after the study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings, but the research will be reported using pseudonyms for institutions and individual participants and as aggregated data. No names will be used.



Opportunity to Ask Questions:

You may ask the investigator questions about this research and have those questions answered before you agree to participate in the study. You may also contact the investigator's faculty advisor in the Department of Educational Administration, Dr. Barbara LaCost, via phone at (402) 472-0988 or email at blacost1@unl.edu with questions. You may contact the investigator at the phone number and email address listed below. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 to voice concerns about the research or if you have questions about your rights as a research participant.

Freedom to Withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researcher, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, your institution, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this 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 form to keep.

Audio Recording:

You are voluntarily making a decision on whether or not to have this interview audio recorded. The audio recording will be destroyed upon completion of the interview transcripts and completion of research project. Please indicate if you consent to allow for an audio recording to be made of the interview proceedings.

- Yes, I consent to have this interview audio recorded.
 No, I do not consent to have this interview audio recorded.

Signature of Participant:

 Signature of Research Participant

 Date

Name and Contact Information of Investigator:

Lindsay Wayt, M.A. Phone: (402) 960-6380 Email: lwayt2@unl.edu