



2017

# THE IMPACT OF LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ON PERCEIVED BRAND EQUITY IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR – AN EXAMINATION OF THREE STAKEHOLDER SEGMENTS

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THE IMPACT OF LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ON  
PERCEIVED BRAND EQUITY IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR – AN  
EXAMINATION OF THREE STAKEHOLDER SEGMENTS

By

John R. Lax

A DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

Submitted to  
H. Wayne Huizenga College of Business & Entrepreneurship  
Nova Southeastern University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

2017

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions or writings of another.

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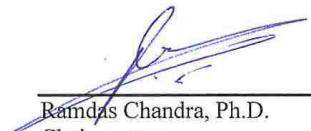
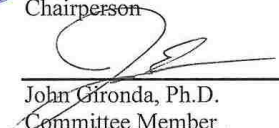
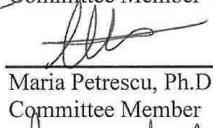
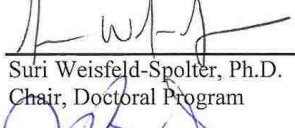
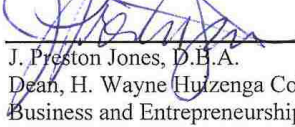
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We hereby certify that this Dissertation submitted John Robert Lax conforms to acceptable standards, and as such is fully adequate in scope and quality. It is therefore approved as the fulfillment of the Dissertation requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Business Administration.

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Nova Southeastern University  
2017

ABSTRACT  
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Branding and brand equity, both as theoretical constructs and as a critical part of applied marketing, have received considerable attention in the academic and practitioner literature. Brand equity, generally considered to be the differential in positive brand image and loyalty enjoyed by one brand as compared to that of a lesser known brand, is often attributed to the activities the firm undertakes to promote the brand and communicate its value or benefits. Branding activities, and the resulting brand equity, have been successfully employed by both consumer and industrial firms and those activities may range from those as conventional as television advertising to as esoteric as extreme sports sponsorships.

However, brand equity among higher education providers, one of the nation's largest and most impactful industries, has received far less attention than either consumer or industrial goods and services. Further, the branding activities in which higher education institutions engage, including those associated with business and economic development in their communities, has been neglected in the academic literature. Thus, this investigation seeks to determine the impact those economic development activities have on brand equity as it is perceived by selected stakeholders.

Specifically, this research asks if economic development activities, such as incubators, faculty consulting, and entrepreneurial education influences the perceived brand equity of the institution, and if so, in what manner. Of specific interest are the brand equity dimensions of loyalty and image, and if the perceptions of these dimensions differ among types of university stakeholders.

As with other brand equity research, brand image and loyalty may vary from segment to segment. This investigation is concerned with three types of stakeholders important to most, if not all, universities; economic development professionals, employers, and alumni. These segments are important in addressing the question of the influence economic development activities have on brand image in the higher education domain as each has the potential to have a profound impact on the success of the institution and its graduates.

Employing a qualitative semi-structured interview methodology, to be followed by a two-round Delphi Study, the aim of this research is to address the gap in the literature regarding brand equity in the university domain. The interviews were conducted with sixteen participants representing the three segments. The participants were selected for

their expertise in the relevant segment. The resulting interviews were transcribed and then coded to reveal relevant themes and to address the research questions. Subsequent to the interviews, a two-round Delphi study was conducted with the same participants with the aim of reaching expert consensus on the research issues.

The research revealed that that four themes dominated the interviews. Functional themes are those that are tangible and applied; integration themes are those that cause the institution to become part of the community; presence themes suggest that simply by its presence in the community, absent of any overt or tangible activity, the university's brand is impacted and finally, promotion themes suggest that the economic development activities under study have an influence on the brand equity on the institution. The study also discovered that there are differences between how the three segments perceived the activities in that, in most cases, each of the three tended to favor those activities that most closely align with their organizational and personal best interests. A somewhat surprising, and potentially important finding, was the role of students and faculty in the brand image of the university. Student internships were determined to be the most highly rated economic development activity with respect to perceived brand equity, and faculty participation in the community was also highly rated. In both cases, the value of these activities were perceived by the participants as being more important than other more expensive and complex activities such as incubators in the context of building brand equity.

Given the lack of existing research in the relationships between business and economic development activities in which universities engage and the brand equity of the university, future research may benefit from continuing to explore this understudied domain in greater detail. As business schools become increasingly interested in experiential education, such as internships and corporate projects, both academic research and applied practice may benefit from a deeper understanding of how these practical and cost effective methods of building a university's brand benefit the institution, its stakeholders and local communities.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the risk of sounding like one of those interminable award show speeches, I apologize in advance for a rather lengthy list of acknowledgments. This is not a journey anyone makes on their own, and I want to be sure to share the end of the trip with all my fellow travelers.

First, for their patience and wisdom, my thanks to the faculty and staff at Nova Southeastern. Putting up with us on your weekends will never be forgotten, and I wish each of you a long and fruitful career. I want to especially thank those exceptional and brave faculty members who so graciously agreed to serve on my committee. I know how little free time faculty has and I am deeply appreciative of yours, for your guidance, and for sharing your invaluable experience.

The list of my friends and colleagues at Saint Leo University, whose support and friendship helped see me through this experience, is far too long for the one page I am told is allowed for acknowledgments. Thank you for your camaraderie, your patience on those many grumpy mornings and for your encouragement. I could not have asked for better friends. A special note of gratitude to Mike – your support and guidance was above and beyond and to Diane – the best ever boss (thanks for the Fridays!). And for Yannis, thanks for the hang gliding, cartoons, and sabbatical coaching. Prague in 2018!

I also want to thank the many students who made the last seven years an amazing experience, but most especially all of you who worked your tails off in Pride and made me proud at TCU and in Jamaica. Those were some pretty rough dorms! You will never know how much you brighten my days and I wish each of you a long life full of joy and wonder.

For the girls – Bindie, Maddie, Tess, Katniss, and Shadow. No writer ever had better desk buddies. One of you always seemed to know when I needed a head bump the most.

For the guys, Dave, Frank, Henry, and Jim – thanks for the beer, baseball and Friday afternoon sanity checks. Your friendship has helped more than you can know and a special shout out for Henry, whose quiet scholarship and good humor was an inspiration.

Ramdas, my friend and mentor, for one of the few times in my life I am at a loss for words. I will never be able to thank you enough. No one will ever mistake me for a scholar, but whatever modest ability I take forward from today I owe to your wisdom and gentle goodwill. And the beers weren't so bad either.

Finally, and by far most importantly, my thanks and love to my wife and companion, Robin. You hung in there through all the missed weekends, skipped dinners, unfinished projects, and general grumpiness. I am truly grateful for your patience and love. And, I promise to do something about the front lawn.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

#### Introduction and Background

The theoretical and practical foundations of branding, and by extension, brand equity have been explored extensively both by the academic community and managers (Aaker, 1992; Davcik, da Silva & Hair, 2015; Keller, 2003) and the concept of the role branding plays in the success, or failure, in higher education marketing has been investigated as well, albeit to a lesser degree (Chapelo, 2010; Pinar, Trapp, Girard & Boyt, 2014). However, very little in the literature has considered the impact of the activities in which universities engage in support of local business and economic growth on the institution's brand and brand equity (Helmsley-Brown, Melewar, Nguyen & Wilson, 2016). Despite our universities, particularly our schools of business, spending significant time and treasure on these growth-centric activities in their local communities (MacLeod, 2014; Shaffer, 2015) there is little in the extant literature supporting that these activities positively influence brand equity as would be expected of similar investments were the institution a firm branding consumer or business-to-business goods. This is not a recent shortcoming of the academic and applied research regarding university marketing. Hayes (2007) notes an American Marketing Symposium (formerly a conference

sponsored by Xavier University) in which the participants determined that the “greatest obstacle to marketing colleges and universities” was a lack of understanding what marketing meant generally, and its specific application within higher education. It was, as Hayes notes, viewed as a “communication tool” (p. 928).

Given the size and scope of the higher education industry it is curious that academics (the institutions are, after all, our careers) have, compared with other similarly-sized domains, paid scant attention to the question of how brand equity theory applies to the higher education environment and more specifically if the sizeable investments our institutions’ marketing practitioners make in local business development returns to us in increased brand equity. This research seeks to address that gap in the literature.

The terms brand and branding have been conceptualized in any number of ways in both the academic literature and the popular business press, often determined by the lens through which the concepts are viewed. Practitioners consider it to be one of their most valued assets (Aaker, 1992; Gupta, Grant & Melewar, 2008) as exemplified by Interbrand’s valuation of Apple’s brand at slightly more than \$178B (Interbrand, 2016). Steve Jobs, the visionary leader of Apple, is known for his view that Apple’s success came not from boxes, bits and apps, but from the relationship the firm’s customers had with the brand and the near fanatical loyalty many consumers have regarding the firm’s devices.

Customers and the public may view the idea of a brand as something more individualistic, often having strong emotional implications (Felix, 2014) and referring to

their favorites as “my brand”. This loyalty to a brand is not without serious consequences for firms as consumers make conscious choices regarding which brands to buy to the exclusion of others and the choice may be seen as part of the consumer’s self-image (Malar, Krohmer, Hoyer & Nyffenger, 2012). Customers often make purchase decisions based less on concrete attributes or features than on how they perceive, and relate to, the brand for products as routine as fast food (French & Smith, 2013) and as complex as the institution to which they entrust their child for four of the most expensive and impressionable years of their young lives (Bowen, 2013).

Academic research generally agrees that a brand consists of both a set of symbols or signs (visual, auditory and olfactory) that are recognized by customers (Keller, 1993), considered to be the brand’s identity; and brand image, which is a set of beliefs, attitudes and attributes that customers associate with those signs and symbols (Aaker, 1992; Davcik et al., 2015; Keller, 1993, 2003). For example, the Nike “swoosh” or the unique engine sound associated with a Harley Davidson motorcycle which taken holistically are the brand’s identity and are analogous to a person’s face, voice or fingerprint. They are, quite literally, the identity of the brand. Much as a person’s face signals a knowledge of that individual among their acquaintances, these cues signal within the brand’s customers a knowledge of the brand. In turn, that knowledge may extend to what Keller (1993), among others (Farquhar, 1989; Gill & Dawra, 2010), consider an information trigger, which may activate other triggers, all of which carry some information about the brand. This information forms the foundation for the brand’s image in the mind of the consumer. Brand image is most typically considered to be the amalgam of beliefs, attitudes,

associations and perceptions a customer (or segment of customers) holds regarding a specific brand (Keller, 1993, 2003)

Similarly, brand equity has been characterized in differing perspectives in the literature, however most generally agree with the views proposed by early researchers in the field such as Farquhar (1989), Aaker (1992, 1996) and Keller (1993, 2003) that conceptualize it from the customer's perspective, comparing the equity enjoyed by a given brand as compared to that ascribed by customers to a competing, but lesser known, brand. In his seminal 1993 publication on brand equity theory Keller argues that brand equity occurs as a result of the customer developing positive attitudes towards the brand as an outcome of the firm employing one or more parts of the marketing mix, noting that that marketers "should take a broad view of marketing activity for a brand" (p. 2) and consider what impact the activity will have on brand knowledge and image, and in turn, the brand's equity. He reinforces this position in his subsequent 2003 article in which he notes that while advertising is important to the branding efforts of the firm, it is "only one – or not even the most important one" (p. 16) and that others such as event marketing, sponsorships and public relations all play an important part in building equity. More recently, Delgado-Ballester, Navarro and Sicilia (2012) establish a clear relationship between the marketing activities in which the firm engages and both brand familiarity and attitude.

While the value of branding generally, and brand equity specifically, to firms has been well explored in the literature for business to consumer goods and to a lesser degree for business to business environments, one of the country's largest, and arguably most



important, industries has received far less attention. Despite being a multi-billion dollar industry with a worldwide enrollment exceeding 160 million students and global implications for industry and society, the research regarding higher education branding and brand equity remains relatively slight (Helmsley-Brown et al., 2016). Higher education branding offers unique challenges in two regards. First, it is hybrid of consumer branding focused on parents and students and business-to-business branding targeting mission-critical segments such as employers, key business alumni and the local business community (Elmuti, Abebe & Nicolosi, 2005; Gordon & Jack, 2010). Each of these stakeholders provides jobs and networking for graduates and serve as a valued source of institutional funding and faculty research opportunities. Second, it is fragmented with branding cues coming from sources as disparate as faculty, athletics, admissions, university development and the institution's marketing department itself (Chapelo, 2010) with little consensus among them regarding what image best serves the university.

While the need for effective branding in universities is clear (Helmsley-Brown, Melewar, Nguyen & Wilson, 2016) what is far less obvious is if higher education marketers have enjoyed any success in their efforts to build strong brands for their institutions, and in turn, any significant brand equity differentiating them from their competition (Chapleo, 2010; Trapp, Girard & Boyt, 2011). In many cases, university brands are associated with sports or their reputation as a party school or have brands associated with superior academics (Joseph, Mullen & Spake, 2012).

This focus, in some cases, has resulted in universities building a well-recognized brand among students and their parents (Rauschnabel, Krey, Babin & Ivens, 2016), however many institutions have been far less successful in developing brand equity as perceived by their business-to-business stakeholders such as employers, key alumni and the local business community (Sullivan, 2011) This lack of clarity regarding branding in higher education institutions (HEI) among both our B2C and B2B customers should come as no surprise to those of us in the trade. Were we to ask faculty, university development and our athletic coaches to define the brand of our universities we would likely receive descriptions of not only different, but perhaps contradictory, brand images.

Despite the importance of B2B stakeholders to the institution, the academic and practitioner literature is slight regarding HEI branding in a B2B setting generally (Sullivan, 2011) and virtually silent with specifics regarding the local business community, employers and key business alumni and the branding activities that would engender a positive brand image and customer loyalty within those three segments. In one of the better known publications addressing the issue of B2B branding theory Kotler and Pfoertsch (2007) note an “important aspect” (p. 358) of B2B branding is that it may well reach not only customers but other stakeholders as well. Kotler and Pfoertsch’s (2007) observation is noteworthy in the context of this research as while the three groups under investigation might be considered customers in the broader context, they are most assuredly business-to-business stakeholders in the higher education institution. Economic development professionals, employers, and key alumni all hold business relationships

with the institution and all three are important to the success of the institution and, in turn, are impacted professionally by the institution.

The activities in which universities engage in support of local business and economic development have been explored in the academic literature. Undertakings such as incubators, corporate alliances and faculty consulting have been found to benefit both the institution and their local community (Ahmad & Ingle, 2011; MacLeod, 2014). In many cases, these activities may serve the same purposes as other non-traditional marketing in which firms engage to promote a product in both B2C and B2B domains, such as raising awareness, driving revenue and sustaining brand loyalty. However, as with research into HEI branding, there is little in the literature exploring how the investments HEIs make in local economic development impact the institution's branding or brand equity, and in turn, the marketing benefits we might expect from a positive brand image and loyalty.

This research seeks to address this gap in the research in two regards. First, to determine if, and how, the economic development activities in which HEIs engage influence the institution's brand equity, specifically the dimensions of brand image and brand loyalty. Second, to contribute to branding theory by exploring brand equity development in a domain largely absent in the extant literature. The findings may be applicable to other domains such as NGOs and non-profits that, much like universities, use community activities to build their brand and the related brand equity, thus contributing to a new stream of research. Managerial implications include guidance for university administrators and marketers to better allocate marketing and community

development investments and to enhance the development of business-to-business relationships.

### Significance

The issue of HEI branding, and its influence on the organization is not without significant consequences for all the stakeholders in higher education including university administrators, employers, alumni, society at large and most notably students and their families. Hemsley-Brown et al., (2016) note that while academic reputation has traditionally been the primary evaluation of universities, brand identity and image are becoming increasingly important to the institution's managers. In their introduction to a recent special 2016 section of the *Journal of Business Research*, the authors note that not only is research in university branding lacking but that "much needs to be learned about how brand meaning and brand identity are perceived in the higher education sector" (p. 3020). Hemsley-Brown can offer a unique viewpoint of the state of research in this domain. Ten years before the 2016 special edition of the *Journal of Business Research* which she edited with Melewar, Nguyen, and Wilson, she and co-author Oplatka (2006) conducted an investigation into HEI marketing in a global environment and reached a similar conclusion – the literature at the time offered little in the way of insights into marketing and branding for external stakeholders. This "then and now" lens suggests that there is a gap in our understanding of HEI branding for stakeholders other than parents and students, especially those offering potentially strategic roles for the university.

This lack of academic understanding has practical implications for the communities in which the HEI operates. Firms seeking expansion or relocation routinely

cite an educated workforce as a prime driver in the decision process (Cooper, Kotval, Kotval & Mullin, 2014) and firms commonly ask economic development professionals courting their business what they can expect from local universities. Beyond workforce issues, ED professionals value universities for the intangible contributions they make in recruiting firms to relocate to a given community. In an economic development meeting attended by this researcher, one CEO of a mid-size electronics firm shared with ED recruiters that his wife specified that there must be a university in the area as she believed that such institutions were the nucleus for culture, entertainment and the intellectual development of her children.

As any faculty member or HEI administrator is all too aware, the availability of both state and federal funding for higher education has diminished in both quantity and ease of access. Seeking to bridge the funding gap, institutions are increasingly relying on alumni as donors. Alumni have expectations that the donations they make will have an impact on the student experience and one measure of their willingness to donate is their brand perception of the institution (Stephenson & Yerger, 2014). Stephenson and Yerger (2014) found that brand identification (typically considered to be a dimension of brand equity) not only increased the likelihood for alumni to donate but also influenced their satisfaction with the way their donation impacted students.

Collectively, the investment that the U.S. makes in higher education is staggering. The Pew Charitable Trust found that in 2013 (the most recent year for which all sources are accounted) HEIs collectively spent 65 billion dollars, of which less than a third was spent on direct instruction, with the remainder invested in administration and academic

support, which includes university marketing, branding, and communications. This is not a recent concern. In their case study of a technology-based private university, Curtis, Abratt and Minor (2009) note that higher education is among the faster growing industries in the U.S., and that the competition among them is “fierce” (p. 404). These authors go on to note the importance of branding in the domain, describing it as “one of the most important assets of any institution” (p. 405).

According to the Department of Education, in 2016 over 20 million students will be enrolled in the nation’s colleges and universities and those institutions employ over four million people, making the industry one of the largest branded professional services sectors in the country. This is not surprising given that a Federal Reserve Board study estimates that college graduates have more than an \$800,000 lifetime earning advantage over those citizens lacking a degree (Onink, 2014).

Given the impact higher education has on local communities and the country as a whole, the influence of economic development on communities’ welfare and the academic interest in brand equity we might assume that the juxtaposition of these three elements to have been explored extensively in both the academic and practitioner literature. Regrettably for the two industries, but fortunate for this research, that is scarcely the case. Although the extant literature does address relationships between local economic development and HEIs, there are notable gaps in the research. First, many of the studies are dated (Moussouris, 1998; Sandhurst & Budish, 1991); second, much of the literature is somewhat narrow, focusing on a specific aspect of ED, such as incubators, sustainability or small business development (Weinstein, Nicholls & Seaton, 1992;

McAdam & Marlow, 2008; Blewitt, 2010) and third, many studies are outside the U.S. market (Keane & Allison, 1999; Gordon & Jack, 2010). Further, the literature provides little clarity on the impact higher education institutions have on development and entrepreneurship (Gordon & Jack, 2010).

Although recent additions to the body of knowledge in the domain have expanded our understanding of the influence branding has on the success of HEIs, the relationship between brand equity and community activities remains largely unexplored, especially with regard to those activities that might be considered external to the institution (Hemsley-Brown, Melewar, Nguyen & Wilson, 2016). This would include economic development activities, which are the focus of this research.

Khanna, Jacob and Yadev (2014) offer a somewhat unique perspective on this gap in the literature in their research regarding universities an “experiential service” (p. 128). In their perspective, this gap exists in part due the complex interaction between the service provider (the HEI) and those consuming the product. HEI customers, they argue, interact with the provider “in complex and uncertain ways” (p. 128). Similar views of the gap in the literature in explaining this complexity, and its impact on providing a brand building service experience, can be found in the work of Chapleo (2010) and Waeraas and Solbakk (2009), the latter of whom describe HEI branding as complex and multifaceted.

While none of these factors lessens the value of the existing literature, this paper aims to fill a gap in the research. Specifically, what is the perceived impact of U. S. HEIs

on localized (the institution's immediate community) economic development in the present post-recessionary environment in the context of brand equity?

### Research Questions

As Keller (1993) notes in his seminal article regarding brands and branding, brand equity can be viewed in two broad perspectives. First, in an economic framework as a measure of the brand's value to the firm as it might be applied to its balance sheet. Simply, how much is the brand worth were it to be purchased as part of an acquisition or merger. The second view examines if, and to what extent, the marketing activities in which the firm engages contribute to the awareness and knowledge of the brand and the resulting perceptions customers or stakeholders have regarding the brand, product or firm. It is the latter of these that is the concern of this research.

More specifically, this research is concerned with brand equity as perceived by key customers, which in Keller's (1993, 2003) view occurs when the customer is both aware of the brand, which he terms brand knowledge, and holds a set of positive perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the brand, considered to be the brand's image. In his view, one which is widely shared by other academic researchers (Davicik et al., 2015; Payne, Ballantyne & Christopher, 2005; Gill & Dawra, 2010) brand equity is the impact on customers' behaviors and perceptions, in relation to the product, as a result of the firm employing one or more elements of the marketing mix as compared to a product that lacks brand knowledge and image in the same, or similar, category. Typically, this would include various forms of promotional activities. This comparative perspective is



particularly relevant to the higher education domain as most major markets have at least two, if not more, schools competing for internships, post-graduation jobs, and donations.

Higher education institutions typically have several customer or stakeholder segments, the relative importance of which varies with the lens through which they are viewed, the mission of the institution and the attitudes of the faculty and staff members. Customers at any given institution might include students, a position not new to criticism and controversy (Helmsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2006), parents, corporate and governmental research investors and the community in which the university operates. This research focuses on three specific customer groups; (1) key alumni (defined as those that donate to, or are regularly engaged with, the institution), (2) key local employers (defined as those that systematically hire the school's interns or graduates) and (3) local economic development professionals within the school's geographic sphere of operation.

Further complicating the issue of HEIs' need to appeal to multiple constituencies is the need to identify what "product" characteristics are valued by which class of customer (stakeholder). Palmer, Koenig-Lewis, and Asaad (2016) note that unlike simple consumer products, universities have "complex bundles of benefits" (p. 3034), some of which may be social as well as academic. This raises the question of which benefits are valued by which customer groups and how those benefits are communicated to those groups. In the case of the higher education domain, the literature offers some contradictions regarding the perceptions of the three groups of stakeholders under investigation. For example, while some research has found alumni to be valuable in brand development (Stephenson & Yerger, 2014) others such as Mourad, Ennew, and Kortam

(2010) found them to be far less influential. This may be attributable to cultural differences as the former study was conducted in Great Britain and the latter in Egypt, however it does leave open the question of the role alumni play in building HEI brands. Similarly, the role of ED professionals is not universal in the literature. Gordon and Jack (2010) found that developing social capital with small to medium enterprises is viewed favorably, however Keane and Allison's (1999) research regarding the role of universities in local ED was definitive regarding the influence of local business on the perception of the school. In their research regarding service touchpoints in higher education, Khanna et al., (2014) note the involvement of both industry and alumni in providing a total student brand experience, and that both parties play different roles.

Keller (1993) notes that his customer-based view of brand equity is useful as it suggests which marketing strategies and tactics are useful to managers making operational decisions. Specific to integrated marketing communications, he suggests that given the growing number of non-traditional tools (keeping in mind that these have evolved considerably since the article's publication) managers must consider the tactical options available to them to create brand associations, and in turn, brand image and knowledge. Strategic marketing activities allow HEIs, as in other industries, to differentiate themselves and stand out from their competition (Sataoen & Waerass, 2016). This is essential in highly competitive markets such as the Tampa Bay MSA (the focus of this study) in which there are no less than six HEIs competing for employers' and donors' attention.

Keller (1993) includes in his definition of brand equity how, and to what degree, customers respond to marketing activities which may incorporate the traditional marketing mix, as well as other activities specific to the brand. He suggests that anything the firm does in the application of the marketing mix has the potential to contribute to increased awareness, and thus by extension – increased positive brand image.

Extending this idea to how firms should generate and manage brand equity, Keller (1993) suggests that firms view marketing decisions in a broad scope and that these decisions should incorporate a variety of promotional and marketing tactics. While academics and campus life are important to the HEIs brand image, the institution's application of logos, marketing collateral, and other identity items also influences that brand image (Pinar, Trapp, Girard & Boyt, 2014).

The decisions HEIs make regarding branding might include those activities which result in increased awareness, recognition and the strength of favorable attitudes and beliefs. Specifically included in these activities are those that are tactical and applied in nature, including non-traditional marketing tools such as sponsorships. These non-traditional efforts at communicating the HEI's brand may be complicated by the need to reach multiple stakeholders. As noted by Dholakia and Acciardo (2014), internal stakeholders are crucial to branding the institution and may be aware of its positive accomplishments that might contribute to those branding efforts, however those accomplishments may be little known outside the university. The current literature offers little to guide us in addressing the question of how, and to what extent, these accomplishments are perceived by external stakeholders with regard to branding the

institution. As described by Helmsley-Brown and her co-authors in two separate studies (Helmsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Helmsley-Brown, Melewar, Nguyen & Wilson, 2016) most of the extant research in higher education branding has focused on more traditional stakeholders, such as students, parents, and faculty and thus the question of how those stakeholders in the business and economic development communities view universities remains to be determined.

Thus, while the economic development related marketing and brand building activities which are the focus of this research are unconventional marketing techniques, they would meet Keller's (1993) standard for potentially contributing to the brand equity of the institution, as well as that of other researchers in the domain (Pinar, et al., 2014; Chapelo, 2010).

Drawing on the dominant view of brand equity as discussed in the literature, the customer stakeholder groups of interest (key alumni, employers and local economic development professionals) in this proposed research and academic research regarding the marketing mix, this research asks:

RQ1: In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to the brand equity of the institution as perceived by differing stakeholder segments?

Customer segmentation is a frequent theme in the branding literature, often questioning if, and how, differing customer segments view a firm's brand (McAlexander, Schouten & Koenig, 2002; Payne, Ballantyne & Christopher, 2005). Davcik et al., (2015) argue that a key component of brand equity theory are the perspectives of all stakeholders

relevant to the brand, rather than the narrower, and commonly employed perspective of consumers alone. Market power, they suggest, rests with stakeholders rather than primarily with the firm's consumers or with the organization itself (Davicik et al., 2015). Williams and Omar (2014) note that one of the challenges in HEI branding is the diversity of stakeholders and that the status of the brand includes those external to the institution.

While customer segmentation is not the focus of Keller's foundational 1993 article, he does address the issue indirectly in three regards. First, he notes that non-product related attributes may vary with the type of customer that is engaged with the product, which he refers to as user imagery. For example, a fashion-conscious buyer may see a Coach handbag as a statement about their status or fashion sense while a cost-conscious buyer might perceive the bag as ostentatious and in poor taste. In both cases, the perception of the product's brand image varies with the customer segment. Second, Keller (1993) notes that the perceived benefits of the product may vary with the type of customer. He cites three types of benefits – functional, experiential and symbolic. Turning again to our handbag purchaser, the cost-conscious buyer may be focused on a more functional purchase – as long as the bag holds her belongings conveniently she has a positive perception of the product. Meanwhile, the fashion buyer seeks the symbolic benefit of the additional prestige that comes with owning the Coach bag. Finally, Keller (1993) argues that brand image may be related to the importance a customer attaches to the product's perceived attributes. The Coach logo is important to one customer but carries little meaning to another. In discussing the brand perceptions various attributes in

the higher education domain, Gutman and Miaoulis (2003) note that some attributes associated with schools may be physical (such as buildings) while others may be less tangible and associated with faculty, clubs or other campus organizations. This view is useful in this investigation as it helps capture intangibility of many of the activities in which HEIs engage in support of economic and business development (Bacdayan, 2002); Gordon & Jack, 2010; O'Connor et al., 2011) and the service driven nature of the HEI branding (Mourad et al., 2010; Williams & Omar, 2014). Gutman and Miaoulis (2003) in viewing this variability in perceived values, employ the means-end model (Gutman 1997, 1982) and suggest that some HEI customers will value tangible (concrete) characteristics such as faculty while others will favor more abstract values such as academic standing (p. 107). The means-end model posits that there is a link or links between a product or service (the means) and a set of values or attributes held by a consumer or group of consumers (the end) (Gutman, 1997, 1982). This is useful in this research as some of the participants may value the HEI's concrete contributions to local ED, such as incubators (Al-Mubarak, Muhammad & Busler, 2015) while others may value more abstract contributions such as faculty assisting in local ED organizations (Bacdayan, 2002).

This concept has been extended to both B2B and HEI branding in the literature. Kotler and Pfoertsch (2007) suggest that branding in a B2B environment be applied to not only the firm's customers but to all their stakeholders. HEIs that customize their branding to specific segments are often more successful in developing a positive and strong brand image than those that fail to do so (Helmsley-Brown et al., 2016; Stephenson & Yerger, 2014). Curtis et al., (2009) characterize corporate branding as the

process through which organizations develop mutually beneficial relationships with external stakeholders, adding that these relationships should be “long range and strategic” (p. 405). In reporting the views of a British Vice Chancellor, Lowrie (2006) notes that employers, a stakeholder of interest to them, takes on a ‘particular marketing role’ (p. 994).

Extending the varying attitudes regarding the brand as perceived by different customer segments, and supported by the extant literature, this research asks:

RQ2: In what manner does brand equity, as perceived by three key stakeholder groups, differ as a result of the economic development activities in which the university engages?

RQ 2a) In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to brand equity as perceived by the key alumni segment of the university’s stakeholders?

RQ 2b) In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to brand equity as perceived by the major employer segment of the university’s stakeholders?

RQ 2c) In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to brand equity as perceived by the economic development professionals segment of the university’s stakeholders?

The branding literature generally agrees that brand knowledge consists of two major dimensions – awareness and image (Davcik et al., 2015; Keller, 1993) and that this perspective applies to B2B branding as well as to consumer applications (Kuhn, Alpert &

Pope, 2008). Support can be found that these dimensions apply to HEI branding as well (Rauschnabel, Krey, Babin & Ivens, 2016).

Brand awareness is the extent to which the brand is present in the customer's mind in a given set of circumstances, and consists of two components - recognition and recall. In the case of the former, does the customer recognize prior contact with the brand when s/he sees or hears a brand cue? For the latter, does the customer retrieve that brand when the product category is invoked? In the context of this research, do the customers under study - alumni, ED professionals, and employers - recall the university in question when considering higher education and recognize that they have engaged with the school in some manner? Clearly, given the nature of the study and its design, the answer to both of these is in the affirmative. Consequently, beyond this cursory explanation, the dimension of brand awareness will not be addressed in this study.

Far more relevant to this study is the brand image dimension of brand equity. When the customer is cued to remember or consider the brand through exposure to identity items, what attributes, benefits and attitudes, which Keller (1993) collectively deems associations, are invoked? For example, Red Bull has employed a strategy of using extreme sports and campus ambassadors to develop a brand image of high energy, unconventionality and all-night partying, especially among young customers. It is not by coincidence that the distinctive blue and silver can is prominently displayed in student bars – the can acts as a trigger to invoke those brand associations. This research asks how the three stakeholder groups under study perceive the brand image of the university as a



result of economic development related activities in which the school engages, leading to the research sub-question:

RQ3: In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to the brand image dimension of brand equity?

Like much of HEI branding in general, the literature exploring brand loyalty in the HEI domain is limited (Balaji, Roy & Sadeque, 2016; Stephenson & Yerger, 2014). Stephenson and Yerger (2014) found that among alumni the level of brand identification correlated with a likelihood of those former students to donate to their alma mater, a matter of no particular surprise. Similarly, Nguyen, Yu, Melewar, and Hemsley-Brown (2016) found evidence to support that what they term as brand ambidexterity (the ability to both explore and exploit marketing opportunities) led to increased student commitment. Keller (1993) suggests that one of the benefits to the firm of increased positive brand equity is brand loyalty, which increases the likelihood that the customer will select the brand in question as opposed to another brand in a like, or similar, product category. The customer repeatedly purchases the positively viewed product and rejects the competing brand with the lesser brand image. This, in turn, may influence promotion and other marketing mix managerial decisions. For example, if the university enjoys very strong brand loyalty among key employers it may focus its efforts on business development networking and appreciation events rather than on broadcast and social media advertising focused on prospective employer acquisition. This begs the question of what universities should do to develop brand loyalty among key stakeholders. Thus, this research seeks to discover:

RQ4: In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to the brand loyalty dimension of brand equity?

As noted in RQ2, this research questions to what degree brand perceptions will vary among differing segments of HEI stakeholders. As in consumer settings, there is support in the literature that we should expect that the three groups under investigation in this study (employers, key alumni and economic development professionals) will view not only the brand itself differently, but will also have varying perceptions regarding what contributes to the brand equity of the HEI (Davicik et.al, 2015; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2007; French & Smith, 2013).

A frequent theme in the branding literature is that regarding precisely which core elements form the construct of brand association. These concepts are often attributed to Keller's foundational work (1993, 2003), in which he identified three components (attributes, benefits, and attitudes), each of which is relevant to this study.

*Attributes* consist both of what product-centric functionality or features the product (university) possesses that allow it to meet the perceived or genuine need(s) of the stakeholders and non-product characteristics such as how the product is used and what customer segment is most likely to use the product in a given manner. The latter of these, in Keller's (1993) analysis, follows a rather conventional marketing segmentation schema and includes both demographic and psychographic elements. In this research, each of our three stakeholder segments has a very specific and distinct profile, especially with regard to psychographic elements which include their political, social and economic attitudes.

*Benefits*, the value of the product to the targeted customer, is most simply described as “what does the product do for me as a customer” and might include both functional benefits (the university helped the local ED professional close a deal or the employer fill a position) and experiential benefits (the alumnus enjoys working with interns).

Finally, *attitudes* are how the customer holistically evaluates the brand. Simply, what does the customer think about the product, firm or specific brand? These attitudes may result from beliefs and expectations regarding how the attributes are going to benefit the customer, such that if there is a perception that needs are being met, the brand attitude tends to be favorable. For example, if a key employer consistently receives high quality applicants from the university, then that employer is more likely to have a positive brand image of the institution.

As there are a number of economic development activities in which the university engages, including incubators, internships, consulting and pro-bono board memberships to name a few, this research seeks to discover if (1) some of these activities are perceived to be more valuable than others and (2) how do those perceptions vary among the stakeholders under study. For example, preparing students for the workforce is recognized as a key responsibility for universities generally, and business schools specifically (Day, 2011; Sullivan, 2011) and that ED professionals value this role in universities. However, Khanna, Jacob and Yadav (2014) note that a frequent complaint among employers is that our universities are poorly preparing students to enter the workforce. This research hopes to provide some clarity regarding how the perceived

value of various ED related activities, such as student preparation, vary among the three types of stakeholders.

Thus, taken collectively, these three dimensions of brand association, and the resulting brand image, leads this research to the sub-question:

RQ5: In what manner does the perceived value of varying types of economic development activities in which the university engages differ among the three stakeholder segments?

### Definition of Terms

#### Brand equity

Brand equity has most commonly been perceived through one of three lenses. First, a financial perspective that evaluates the financial impact on the firm's balance sheet such as that published annually by the Interbrand Group. Second, leveraging a strong existing brand to introduce a new product or product line, commonly known as brand extensions (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Third, as perceived by Keller (1993) and others who suggest that brand equity occurs when the firm's customers develop a set of positive beliefs and attitudes regarding the brand as a result of marketing activities in which the firm engages. It is the last of these perspectives from which this research draws the definition of brand equity.

For this research, the definition of brand equity relies heavily on the early work of Keller (1993; 2003) and others that conceptualize it as the customer's response to the product, firm or brand as a result of the firm applying one or more components of the

marketing mix. The definition is also dependent, in part, on that discussed by Davcik et al., (2015) in their recent review of brand equity research which incorporates loyalty, awareness, and associations as well as identity elements that are associated with the brand. These authors also note the importance of marketing activities that contribute to the development of brand equity and which activities are important. Thus, while there is no single definition of brand equity that is universally accepted in the literature, the common elements would suggest that it would be defined as the perceptions and attitudes regarding the brand as perceived by customers as a result of some application of marketing activities.

Specific to this research, brand equity is defined as the “incremental effect on the university’s brand as a result of the economic development activities in which the institution engages”. For example, is the university’s brand more positively perceived by the three key customer groups as a result of the faculty providing pro-bono consulting to the local non-profit economic development council?

#### Brand image

Keller (1993) defines brand image as “perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in customer memory”. These perceptions are invoked when brand identity symbols such as logos or taglines are seen or heard (Battacharya & Sen, 2003; Aaker, 1992).

An example of this phenomenon would be the attitudes and perceptions invoked when many, if not most, customers see the Apple name or logo. Despite a segment of customers who may view Apple as expensive and elitist, the brand perceptions that are

arguably most commonly associated with Apple are innovation, user-friendliness, and convenience.

Similarly, this research defines brand image as “those attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and opinions invoked when the targeted market segments see or hear the HEI’s name, logo, mascot, students, faculty or other identifying symbols.”

### Brand Loyalty

Although brand loyalty has been conceptualized in a number of ways in the literature (Tabaku & Zerellari, 2015; McAlexander, Schouten & Koenig, 2002; Keller, 1993) most definitions are in agreement that a key element is the likelihood of the customer to patronize the firm or to buy the firm’s products or services on a continuing basis (Oliver, 1999), often to the exclusion of other similar brands. As the three targeted segments in this research are unlikely to “patronize” the HEI in the conventional sense by attending the institution, this study defines brand loyalty as “the likelihood of the targeted segments to provide their support to the university”. This definition is operationalized as the stakeholders engaging with the HEI in tangible activities such as internships, recruiting new graduates, donations, research projects and supporting initiatives such as incubators and student-run business organizations.

### Economic Development

What constitutes economic development varies widely depending on the lens through which it is viewed and has been variously described as being broad and global in scope, or as is the case in this research, more narrowly defined. Collins Economic

Dictionary views it broadly as “a process of economic transition involving the structural transformation of an economy through industrialization and a raising of gross national product and income per head” (Collins, 2006).

This research takes a view more closely aligned to that of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), a global economic development industry organization, which characterizes ED as “...the core topics of globalization, sustainability, entrepreneurship, and economic restructuring. IEDC works with communities and economic development organizations to weave these core topics into pertinent economic development projects, such as community revitalization, business development, and job creation nationwide and abroad” (IEDC, 2013).

In this research, economic development is defined as “activities that foster, support, fund or otherwise promote job creation, tax base expansion, firm start-up or firm relocation in the service area of the HEI.” Thus, this research is interested in a local firm starting a new microbrewery that buys a building and adds ten jobs but is not concerned with the next Gatorade® or blockbuster pharmaceutical created by HEI research as neither of these necessarily have any impact on local jobs or tax base.

### Localized Economic Development

As with economic development itself, the concept of “local” varies considerably with the perspective of the entity involved. The World Bank (2013) comments “The practice of local economic development can be undertaken at different geographic scales. A local government pursues LED strategies for the benefit of its jurisdiction, and individual communities and areas within a local government's jurisdiction can also pursue

LED strategies to improve their economic competitiveness”. Focusing on the relationship between HEIs and ED, this paper defines “local” as “the geographic area in which, given the resources of the specific HEI, the institution can directly impact economic growth and development.” Thus, a major public university might have a multi-county influence while a small private institution might be restricted to the immediate community or county level.

### Higher Education Institution

For the purposes of this research, a higher education institution must meet two criteria. First it must be regionally accredited (SACS, for example); second, it must be accredited by either (or both) the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE) or the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). Further, the institution must engage in some type of ED activities, which might include, but not be limited to, business consulting, incubators, supporting local economic development councils or organizations and holding leadership roles in chambers of commerce. Private, for-profit institutions (i.e., the so-called proprietary schools) are specifically excluded from this definition.

### Stakeholders

Carroll (1979), in discussing his pyramid of corporate responsibility, suggests that a stakeholder is any individual who is impacted by the activities in which the firm or organization engages.



Higher education institutions typically have several customer or stakeholder segments, the relative importance of which varies with the lens through which they are viewed, the mission of the institution and the attitudes of the faculty and staff members. Customers at any given institution might include students (controversial, but increasingly the case), parents, corporate and governmental research investors and the community in which the university operates. This research focuses on three specific customer groups; key alumni (defined as those that donate to, or are regularly engaged with, the institution), key local employers (defined as those that systematically hire the school's interns or graduates) and local economic development professionals within the school's geographic sphere of operation.

Table 1  
*Summary of Definitions*

Term	Definition	Literature
Brand equity	The incremental effect on the HEI's brand as a result of local economic development activities	Keller, 1993; 2003 Davicik, da Silva & Hair, 2015
Brand image	Attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and opinions invoked when the targeted market segments see or hear the HEI's identity cues	Aaker, 1992 Keller, 1993 Battachararya & Sen, 2003
Brand loyalty	The likelihood of the targeted segments to provide their support to the HEI	Keller, 1993; 2003 Tabaku & Zerellari, 2015
Economic development	Activities that foster, support, fund or otherwise promote job creation, tax base expansion, firm start-up or firm relocation in the service area of the HEI	Collins, 2006 UICIFD, 2013 IEDC, 2013 Shaffer, 2015
Localized development	The geographic area in which, given the resources of the specific HEI, the institution can directly impact economic growth and development	World bank, 2013
Higher education institution	The institution must be regionally accredited and hold either (or both) AACSB, IACBE or similar business school specific accreditation	N/A
Stakeholders	Key Alumni: those that donate to or are regularly engaged with, the HEI Key local employers: Those firms that systematically hire the HEI's interns and graduates Local ED Professionals: Economic development professionals within the school's geographic sphere of operation	Carroll

### Delimitations

This research will be delimited to constrain the scope of the investigation and to focus on very specific target segments.

As noted above, universities have any number of customer or stakeholder groups. The purpose of this research is not to address brand equity in universities for all stakeholder groups. Thus this research is constrained to examining only three: alumni, employers and local economic development professionals. These three were selected for their potential to make a substantive impact on the institution. The results of the study regarding the impact of IMC activities may not be generalizable to other types of stakeholders.

Universities employ any number of marketing devices in order to reach various customer segments, and this research is not intended to address each of those. Thus, this research is examining a very specific and unique type of non-conventional marketing and brand development. Specifically, this investigation will focus on the economic development activities in which the institution engages to the exclusion of other, perhaps more traditional, forms of marketing. As these ED activities are complex and primarily appeal to a B2B customer, the influence of these activities may not be generalizable to other types of customers.

Most, if not all, communities and regions have one or more economic development organizations (there are more than ten in the Tampa Bay MSA alone). This research does not seek to address a broad geographic representative sample but rather focuses specifically on the Tampa Bay Region due to time and budget constraints.

This research is confined to examining only the brand image and brand loyalty dimensions of brand equity. Other dimensions, such as awareness, the extent to which the customer/consumer knows the brand exists (Keller, 1993) are excluded as being self-

evident. If the participant were not aware of the HEI under investigation, they would not be part of the study.

### Assumptions

This research assumes that higher education institutions engage in economic development activities. While there is ample evidence that many, if not most, institutions do so, there is little research that specifically addresses the extent to which HEI's use ED activities as branding strategies.

This research also assumes that most, if not all, economic development leaders in the service areas of HEI's are aware of the HEI's business school and the activities in which the institution engages. Finally, the research assumes the participants in the research are engaged with the university in such a manner that they can provide insight into the institution's brand equity.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of Literature

#### Branding and Brand Equity

##### The Concept of Brand

The concept of brand and branding has a long and storied history in academia, culture and among practitioners. Early academic research viewed it as the psychological benefits emanating from product consumption (Davicik et al., 2015), Coca-Cola made the now ubiquitous image of a fat, jolly Santa a mainstay of promoting their product at the holidays and who among us has not seen the obligatory cattle branding scene in many an American western movie. Farquhar (1989) notes that early “branders” burned the name of their whiskey into the barrel to ensure, much like modern firms, that consumers knew what they were buying and could make the distinction between their whiskey and an inferior, perhaps “unbranded”, competitor.

The term brand has been conceptualized in any number of ways, often determined by the lens through which it is viewed. Practitioners consider it to be one of their most valued assets (Aaker, 1992) as exemplified by Interbrand’s valuation of Apple’s brand at slightly more than \$170B (Interbrand, 2015). This economic perspective views the firm’s brand, and the resulting equity, as a measure of the brand’s value to the firm as it might

be applied to its balance sheet. Simply, how much is the brand worth were it to be purchased as part of an acquisition or merger? While Interbrand's proprietary multi-dimensional valuation methodology is often accepted as an industry standard, academic research has yet to agree on a preferred method for arriving at brand valuation, and the valuations themselves may be subjective in nature (Davicik et al., 2015). This caveat notwithstanding, the value of brands to firms is quite real and considered to be a valued asset.

Customers and laypersons may view the concept as something more personal, often having strong emotional connotations (Felix, 2014) and referring to products as "my brand". This loyalty to a brand is not without serious consequences for firms as consumers make conscious choices regarding which brands to buy to the exclusion of others and the choice may be seen as part of the consumer's self-image (Malar et al., 2011). This awareness and loyalty on the part of the customer represent a substantial asset and differential advantage to firms, who may zealously protect their brand. The Institute for Public Policy estimates that branded music piracy costs the American recording industry \$2.7 billion each year (Siwek, 2007) and The International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition claims branded product counterfeiting costs may exceed \$200 billion each year (Quinn, 2010).

Academic research generally agrees that a brand consists of both a set of symbols or signs (visual, auditory and olfactory) that are recognized by customers (Keller, 1993), considered to be the brand's identity; and brand image, which is a set of beliefs, attitudes and attributes that customers associate with those signs and symbols (Aaker, 1992).

In later writings, Keller (2003) noted that brands, and their associated image, serve a valuable service in helping consumers select products and make decisions regarding which brand to purchase. Thus, when a mom sees the famous tiger “symbol” on a cereal box, it may trigger a set of memories and attitudes regarding Frosted Flakes® and she will select the “They’re Great!” brand rather than a competitor, an outcome Keller (2003) refers to as simplifying the consumer’s choice. These attitudes and beliefs form the brand’s image and aid the consumer in making choices about which brand will be selected.

While packaging, often the delivery vehicle for these signs and symbols as in the case of Frosted Flakes® and its many similarly decorated competitors, has largely disappeared from definitions of the marketing mix, it may be a valued part of the firm’s brand identity. Sandom (2008) found that increasing the customer’s attention to the product by a second or less significantly increased purchase likelihood. Our cereal shopping mom, recognizing Tony as part of her brand’s identity on the box, triggers her associations and she selects the cereal as opposed to Tony’s many competitors. This facilitated choice, resulting from the shopper’s recognition of the identity symbol and the resulting perceived brand imagery, reinforces future purchases of the product and, in turn, the foundation for the customer’s brand loyalty.

Clearly, this has considerable value to Kellogg as the brand identity symbol, be it delivered on Saturday morning cartoons or to mom while shopping, may trigger associations, benefiting both parties in the exchange. As important as Tony, and the thousands of other signs and symbols we associate with our favorite products, is to

creating this identity, a brand is far more than simply the name and its face or voice. Davcik et al., (2015) notes that the brand is not a mere name. Rather, it is the consumer's perception that the promises they associate with the brand will be kept and that some specific value will be delivered. These authors further note that a comprehensive branding plan on the part of the firm go beyond visible characteristics and incorporate customers' expectations and the intangible qualities they associate with the brand.

Much of the underpinning for this conceptual link between identity and image can be found in Keller's 2003 building blocks of brand development. Keller (2003) argues that this synergy of identity and image leads to a four-step process for building a brand:

Brand identity – “who” is the brand to the consumer. How aware is the customer of the brand and how salient is it to them?

Brand image – what does the brand mean to the customer? How does the customer perceive and relate to the brand? While identity may serve as the trigger, it is the intangible “feeling” qualities that are invoked in the customer's mind that form the lasting relationships the customer has with the brand?

What about the brand – how does the customer respond to brand? Customers may develop brand judgments regarding the product (cognitive evaluations regarding quality and performance) and brand feelings (emotional connections regarding the customer's personal feelings with the brand).

What about the brand and the customer - Keller's (2003) final building block seeks to explain the relationship the customer has with the brand. How closely does the brand resonate with the customer and how deeply felt is the relationship? True brand



resonance, in his perspective, results in what he refers to a “harmonious relationship” and being “in sync”.

This early work by Aaker (1991), Keller (1993; 2003), Farquhar (1989) and Ambler (1997) provides the foundation for contemporary thinking regarding brand equity, its multiple perspectives, and dimensions. The discussion that follows addresses these perspectives and the specific dimensions of brand image and brand loyalty.

### Brand Equity

Brand equity, in the context of the HEI domain, represents a unique challenge. As noted by Hemsley-Brown et al., (2016) in the recent special section of the *Journal of Business Research*, much of the research in the field has limited applicability to higher education. They further note that while universities are adopting a more businesslike approach to marketing and branding in a highly competitive environment, there is lack of evidence of what works in building a “credible brand” (p. 3020). Further, if we adopt the commonly accepted view of Keller (1993, 2003) that brand equity is a comparative concept that measures the differential between a stronger brand and a lesser known or understood brand, we struggle with the notion of which “brands” should we compare to any given university, what marketing activities influence those competing brands and which stakeholders are the institution’s marketers attempting to reach with their branding efforts.

Much like the foundation concept of brand, the brand equity construct has multiple perspectives. Complicating any research endeavor regarding the concept, including this investigation, is that limited consensus exists among either academics or

practitioners regarding what precisely the term means, its antecedents, outcomes to firms or how it is, or should be, achieved. Colloquially speaking, both academics and researchers “must pay your money and take your chances”.

As with the term brand itself, academic researchers in finance or accounting, as well as practitioners interested in the firm’s financial value, may view brand equity in a manner similar to Interbrand, as an entry on the firm’s balance sheet. Marketing research typically takes a more abstract viewpoint, with most researchers agreeing that brand equity is the additional value which can be attributed to the application of the marketing mix in which the firm has engaged (Shafi & Madhavaiah, 2014), which would often include the focus of this research, promotional activities (Brunello, 2013). This is a viewpoint consistent with the early research in the field by Aaker (1992) and Keller (1993) both of whom describe brand equity in terms of the differential impact of the customer’s brand knowledge and awareness due to how the firm employs various elements of the marketing mix.

Researchers have assigned brand equity a variety of dimensions, however to a greater or lesser extent, all agree with Keller’s (1993; 2003) assessment that the construct is multidimensional and that the concept is too complex to be measured by any single factor. Aaker’s early work (1991) identified five dimensions (awareness, associations, loyalty, perceived quality, and assets) while Keller’s 1993 seminal work included brand knowledge and image as important components. Lassar, Mittal, and Sharma (1995) introduced the elements of brand strength and brand value to the mix. In his formative 1993 article Keller examines if, and to what extent, the marketing activities in which the

firm engages contribute to the awareness and knowledge of the brand and the resulting perceptions customers or stakeholders have regarding the brand, product or firm. He concludes that the application of the marketing mix is a key factor in developing a positive brand image, leading to increased brand equity.

Some research, including this investigation, is concerned with brand equity as perceived by key customers, which in Keller's (1993) view occurs when the customer is cognizant of the brand and holds a set of positive perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the brand, considered to be the brand's image as perceived by the customer or, as in the case of this research, the stakeholder(s). In Keller's (1993) view, one which is widely shared by other academic researchers, brand equity is the impact on customers' behaviors and perceptions, in relation to the product, as a result of the firm employing one or more elements of the marketing mix as compared to a product that lacks brand knowledge and image in the same, or similar, category.

The following explores some of the prevalent perspectives regarding brand equity.

#### Branded vs. Unbranded

A perspective common in the early work in the field (Farquhar, 1989; Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993) viewed brand equity as the differential between the perceived value of a "branded" product as opposed to a product in a like or similar category that lacks a brand, or is "unbranded". Farquhar (1989) defines brand equity as the added value that a brand imparts to the product, going on to conclude that as products offer consumers benefits of some nature, anything that adds value beyond its functional purpose might be considered as a differential resulting from branding. Keller's (1993) view is similar, but

specifically adds the influence of marketing activities (the marketing mix) opining that brand equity is the result of the additional effect of marketing activities on a branded product as opposed to one which lacks a brand. Similarly, Shafi and Madhavaiah (2014) write that a brand has positive (or negative) equity when the product is “identified” (a known brand) as compared to a brand which the consumer does not identify. French and Smith (2013) suggest that all research, to greater or lesser degrees, defines brand equity as “incremental value endowed to a product or service compared to an unbranded counterpart” (p. 1357).

This has also been viewed from a price perspective evaluating the price premium that consumers will pay for a branded vs. unbranded product or service (French & Smith, 2013; Aaker 1996). This unbranded viewpoint argues that consumers will pay more for brands they recognize as opposed to brands with which they are completely unaware. An important distinction in this view is that this is not comparing brand image, resonance or even consideration set – it is likely that in a given product category many consumers have one (or more) brands that they prefer. Rather, this assumes that the consumer is largely or completely unfamiliar with the brand – that is, to them it does not exist as part of the product category.

This view of the concept does indeed offer a satisfying perspective as it allows for academic research that compares “A to B” and provides results that can be described both quantitatively and qualitatively (French & Smith, 2013). Further, it allows practitioners a method to evaluate the effects of, and justification for, marketing activities in which the

firm engages, as in, “does what we do and what we spend on branding result in additional financial value to the firm?”

Despite its ubiquitous appearance in the literature and its appeal as a metric, the concept suffers from an assumption that such a thing as an “unbranded” product exists (Davicik et al., 2015). While in the earlier research (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993) this may have made sense allowing for the high costs and relatively low access to high consumption media (given the limited number of television stations and lack of e-media), it is far less convincing in today’s hyper-rich and comparatively low cost media environment. With the exception of perhaps low-cost impulse purchases (mom tries a new cereal which is on sale), the ease of access to information makes it unlikely that any product is truly unbranded. Even in the case of the new cereal, mom can open her phone’s browser and access the new product’s Website in less time that it took to write this paragraph.

In their recent article seeking a unified theory of brand equity, Davcik and his fellow researchers (2015) argue that not only does the notion of unbranded products limit future research in the field, but that it is very unlikely for a product to be utterly unbranded. They further maintain that this is notably true for industrial products in that any product that enters the B2B marketplace will have a name and be sold by a recognizable firm. Given the ease with which both B2C and B2B buyers can access detailed information regarding, and reviews of, nearly any product this seems a reasonable claim by the authors.

In the context of this research, the idea of an unbranded product is equally unlikely. An employer or ED professional in Florida may never have heard of Willamette University in Oregon, despite its good “brand” among its own stakeholders. However, as most such branded universities focus their economic development efforts (and the associated marketing) on a local basis, Davcik’s et al., (2015) position is likely to be accurate.

### The Role of the Marketing Mix

While universities spend not inconsiderable sums on the marketing mix in general, and on branding specifically, the efficacy of those activities remains unclear (Bowen, 2013, Chapelo, 2010; Joseph, Mullen & Spake, 2012;). This lack of clarity may be exacerbated when considered in the context of branding focused on customers other than students and parents, such as the B2B customers (employers, ED professionals, and key alumni) of interest in this investigation as these groups may be more difficult to reach via the traditional HEI marketing tools such as campus visits, glossy brochures and social media.

The importance of marketing communication in positioning or branding a university is by any means new. Gutman and Miaoulis (2003), largely drawing on material from 2000 and earlier, argued that “in an era in which funding for higher education is difficult to come by, the marketing communication component of enrollment management has become increasingly important” (p. 105). The authors further note that university communications often make service and benefit promises that cannot be met and a positive brand image, drawn in part by communications, is an important part of

recruiting students. There is support that as vitally important as this promotion, and the brand message it communicates, is to recruiting students that is may be equally important to building brand relationships with other stakeholders. Cooper, Kotval, Kotval and Mullin (2014) discuss the importance of communication in developing and maintaining community partnerships and Elmuti, Abebe, and Nicolosi (2005) make a similar argument in discussing university and corporate alliances.

While there is little question that the application of the marketing mix is important to HEI branding (Bowen, 2013), what is far less evident is how that application works for B2B customers. The distinction between various stakeholders has been noted in the existing higher education branding literature. Dholakia and Acciardo (2014) describe the role of advertising and promotion as differentiating and communicating the university's brand and its competitive advantage, and that these "visible marketing tools" are important in communicating the brand to "various stakeholders" (p. 145). Clayton, Cavanagh and Hettche (2012) found that most school were unsuccessful in creating a unique message in their public service communications and Chapleo (2010) noted that universities may lack clear objectives in marketing communications. Hayes (2007), reporting the outcomes of his 2006 Delphi study on the future of marketing universities, states that the panelists in his study (faculty, practitioners, and consultants) replied that "the next big thing" in higher education marketing would be integrated marketing communications. In the two-round study, the panelists reported that not only did they believe that marketing communication would be the next focus in higher education, but

that projecting a unified brand image and message across the entire institution is important (p. 930)

In much of the extant literature, there is a consensus that brand equity measures the value of the brand resulting from marketing mix activities executed by the firm (Aaker, 1993; Davcik et al., 2014; Keller 2003,). For example, Harley Davidson, using both conventional advertising such as print and broadcast and non-traditional methods such as sponsoring charity “poker rides”, has developed the dichotomous image of toughness and compassion and enjoys near fanatical brand loyalty. Newcomer Viper Motorcycles offers a similar product but has yet to engage in extensive marketing promotions. Thus, in this case, the differential represents the extensive brand equity garnered by Harley as a result of their application of marketing activities, many of which would be considered unconventional, while Viper has relatively little equity, arguably for their lack of customer-focused marketing.

In a recent study conducted by EffectiveBrands, in conjunction with several leading firms, Arons, Driest and Weed (2014) found that firms that effectively used data to drive their marketing communications were not only far higher sales performers but were also more effective at achieving what they refer to as the three “manifestations of brand purpose”:

functional benefits – how well the product does the job for which it is purchased

emotional benefits – how well the brand meets some specific emotional need

societal benefits – what contribution the brand makes to society



Simply put, the brand performed better when marketing promotion was effectively applied as result of understanding and using data. The authors further argue that this use of data, and the resulting application of marketing activities, will lead marketers to switch from the traditional view of share of wallet to share of customer experience (Arons et al., 2014). Given that most brand research expresses the importance of the customer's relationship and experience with the product or brand (Keller & Lehmann, 2006), this evolution in how marketers view and use data to craft their brand strategy will continue to be of interest to both researchers and practitioners. While early thought leaders in brand equity, from both the academic community and industry, such as Aakers (1991), Keller (1993, 2003) and Farquhar (1989) had comparatively far less in the way of data on which to base their propositions regarding the use of the marketing mix, the results of the EffectiveBrands (2014) study suggesting that marketing promotions is vital to brand development is quite compatible with the conclusions reached by those researchers.

According to Farquhar (1989), ads play a key role in developing brand attitudes and evaluations, citing successes by well-recognized brands such as Gillette, Acura, and Hagen-Dazs. He notes that the marketing driving this development may grow and evolve with time, as in the case of the Campbell's Kids and Betty Crocker, who at the time of his article had been updated five times and has since changed again to better reflect contemporary working women.

Aaker (1992, 1996) discusses the importance of developing clear brand identities, symbols and slogans and that these are reliant on what he describes as "integrated,

consistent communications” a standard part of the marketing mix. Given what we would consider a relatively simple media environment when compared with today’s complex mix of electronic and web-enabled channels, Aaker (1992) notes the variety of choices available to marketers and the difficulty of coordinating them. In the context of unconventional or non-traditional marketing, he offers the example of the former car manufacturer Saturn allowing customers to visit the plant to watch their car being built.

Keller’s (1993) early work in brand equity states that image and awareness are the foundation from which all other equity dimensions (recognition, association, recall among others) develop and that this equity is the result of how the brand is marketed. Specifically, brand equity (positive or negative) occurs in reaction to the “product, price, promotion, or distribution” of the brand. He further notes that brand knowledge is central to his view of brand equity and that promotion in one form or another is a key element in building that knowledge and awareness.

Other authors support this position. The application of a combination of the traditional “4Ps” of marketing (price, place, promotion, and product) have been found to be important contributors to building multiple dimensions of brand equity, including awareness, loyalty and perceived quality (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000). These authors found that advertising, among other parts of the marketing mix, plays an important role in developing strong brand associations and that consistent, repetitive use of advertising reinforced these brand elements among consumers.

In a somewhat different perspective, Mourad, Christine, and Kortam (2011), in their examination of branding in universities, found no evidence that marketing activities,

either controlled in the sense of traditional communications or those that are less controlled such as word-of-mouth, had any influence on student perceptions of the value of the institution's brand. Their research also determined that market leadership lacked any significant role in brand value evaluation in the perception of the students they studied. Dholakia and Acciardo (2014) suggest a HEI specific view of the mix that incorporates "people, processes and prominence" (p. 146). Given the importance of various stakeholders in the branding of the institution, such as industry and employers (Khanna et al., 2014; Ahmad & Ingle, 2011) this view of the mix offers a unique lens as these stakeholders likely consume media in different ways than do parents and students, the more traditional targets of HEI branding efforts (Bowen, 2013). Most HEI communications promoting the university's image is far more concerned with messaging regarding sports (Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014; Branvold & Synowka, 2009) and campus life (Bowen, 2013) than with external stakeholders such as the business community and employers. Dholakia and Acciardo (2014) go on to note that while internal stakeholders were aware of the positive accomplishments of their institution that recognition was limited among those external to the school.

More recent research supports the role and importance of the marketing mix, most notably communications. The use of communication technologies has been found to influence the development of brand communities and the resulting positive brand behavior (Zhang, Shabbir, Pitsaphol & Hassn, 2014). These communities, the authors argue, increase brand awareness and relationships, leading to increased brand equity. They cite the use of marketing promotions by firms to develop deeper relationships and

“participation and engagement” by members of the brand community, building stronger bonds and “evangelist consumers” (Zhang et al., 2014).

Baxendale, Macdonald, and Wilson (2015) found that an increase in communication touchpoints, both traditional and e-based, resulted in increased brand consideration. The concept and importance of marketing touchpoints has been found to be important by other researchers as well. Khanna, Jacob, and Yadev (2014) in their investigation of student perceptions, describe a Brand Touchpoint Wheel (p. 131) model in which industry interface and co-curricular activities were found to be important in the course phase of the student experience. This is particularly relevant to this proposed research as the stakeholders under investigation, notably ED professionals and intern employers, provide precisely these activities. The third stakeholder group of interest in this study, alumni, were found by Khanna and her fellow researchers to be influential in brand perception in what they term as the “post passing” phase of the student lifecycle (p. 131), notably in the admission and academic processes (p. 134). This is interesting in light of the finding by Mourad et al., (2010) that what they describe as the role of alumni in “after sales service (p. 413) had a negative impact on brand equity and is inconsistent with most literature that places a value on service.

Others have found online marketing to be effective in developing branding and brand behavior. Micu and Pentina (2014) found that the use of Twitter positively impacted brand image and personality perceptions. Customer engagement, a critical element in brand awareness and perceptions, has been found to be enhanced by the use of e-communications, most notably social and online media (DeVries & Carlson, 2014).

Despite extensive literature in the field of branding and communications, in Keller's later work he argues that the question of how, and to what extent, the application of the marketing mix influences brand equity remains unanswered. In his 2006 article with co-author Lehmann, they note that one of the open research questions is how marketing activities impact branding and to what extent those activities influence customer relationships. This open issue notwithstanding, they note that integrating marketing activities of various types, including print, broadcast, and promotions can have a positive impact on the firm, its brand and the brand's various dimensions. The extent to which this is applicable to universities and their stakeholders is largely absent in the literature.

### Brand Image

As with branding and other specific dimensions of brand equity, both practitioners and academic researchers have yet to agree on a single conceptual definition of brand image, although most agree on a shared view that image is a fusion of associations, perceptions, and attitudes stored in the consumer's memory (Danes, Hess, Story & York, 2010; Keller, 1993). What comes to the consumer's mind when the brand is evoked by some sign or symbol? The Starbucks coffee shop chain has built a global brand offering what it considers a "home away from home" through consistent product offerings, personalized service and an experience of comfortable furniture and popular contemporary music. Thus, when a consumer sees the ubiquitous green mermaid logo anywhere in their travels, they associate the brand with home and a positive experience.

While precise definitions vary, academic research generally agrees that brand image is a fundamental component of brand equity and that it is characterized by the manner in which customers view the product, firm or specific brand. Keller (2003) suggests that brand image is how customers think about a brand and consists of intangible characteristics including values, personality, and usage imagery. He identifies three key dimensions of brand image:

- Strength – how strongly does the customer identify with the brand?
- Favorability – how important or valuable is the brand?
- Uniqueness – how distinct is the brand when compared with other similar brands?

Thus, the brand image is less how the customer uses the brand in a practical or “hands-on” perspective than it is how the customer perceives their relationship and interaction with the brand – that is, how the brand “feels” to them. Magid, Cox, and Cox (2006) adopt a similar view, characterizing brand image as the customer’s response to brand symbols such as a name or sign. They argue that this, in turn, leads to some perception of brand attributes and qualities. When a customer sees the ubiquitous brown trucks that have become integral to UPS’s brand, they may associate that color with reliability and quality service.

Aaker’s (1992; 1996) view is quite similar and incorporates brand value, characteristics and associations into the brand image construct, supporting the generalized view that image is a perspective external to the firm and is driven by its customers’ perceptions. This external view can, in turn, lead to either gains or losses in

brand equity, that is, the differential between the firm's value with, or without, a strong positive, or negative, brand image as defined by the firm's customers. Gill and Dawra (2010), drawing on the work of Aaker (1996) suggest that firms leverage various assets or sources to build brand equity and that these sources may contribute to the firm's image and, in turn, their brand equity.

Other researchers have suggested alternative dimensions of brand image. Devries and Carlson (2014) suggest brand image may be enhanced when there is congruence between the consumer's self-image and that of the brand. Danes et al., (2010), in studying how consumers view fast food providers, posit a group effect in which communications within, and between, groups may have an impact on brand image. Societal factors may influence brand image, as suggested by Rios, Martinez, Moreno, and Soriano (2006) who found purchasers of household cleaning products had higher levels of positive brand image when the product was considered to be environmentally friendly than when that perception was lacking. Ross-Woolridge, Brown, and Minsky (2004) discuss the impact of the halo effect in developing positive brand image and in turn, increased brand equity.

Gutman and Miaoulis (2003) offer a different lens into brand image by suggesting that the application of the means-end model is appropriate in capturing the services, attributes and characteristics that customers value in a brand (p. 106). The model proposes that there is series of links between the product or service, characterized by a set of attributes or features/functionality, and a customer or group of customers who may value those attributes. The "means" is the product and the "ends" is the consumer (Gutman, 1982). In his more recent work, Gutman, in tandem with Miaoulis (2003),

applies the model to higher education suggesting that the HEI serves as the means and the ends as a set of values held by the institution's stakeholders or customers. In the context of this specific investigation the means are those economic development activities in which the HEI engages and the ends are the extent to which the three stakeholder groups of interest value those attributes with regard to brand image and loyalty.

Regardless of which facet of brand image is under investigation in any given publication, a consistent finding throughout the body of branding research, as might be intuitively expected, is that increased positive brand image influenced the second dimension of brand equity of interest in this research, brand loyalty.

### Brand Loyalty

As with other dimensions of branding and brand equity, in the higher education and economic development domains, the literature has little to offer regarding brand loyalty (Chapelo, 2010), with most of what little research exists on brand loyalty towards universities focusing on either athletics or student experience (Joseph, Mullen & Spake, 2012). This issue is exacerbated in the context of those customers under investigation in this research as they are unlikely to "buy" the product other than perhaps sending their children to the institution. Consequently, we look to other, perhaps more business-centric, methods of demonstrating brand loyalty.

Loyalty is considered to be a fundamental aspect of brand equity (Aaker, 1996; Dick & Basu, 1994; Felix, 2014) and is typically recognized as the degree to which customers are committed to a given brand and are likely to purchase or patronize it on an ongoing, regular basis (Oliver, 1999). As with other dimensions of branding and brand



equity, researchers have reached limited consensus on a precise definition of brand loyalty or how best to measure it.

Brand loyalty is typically categorized in one of two frameworks. First, as a single dimensional construct focused on the explicit behavior of customers as described by Che and Seethraaman, (2009). In this case, why the customer is loyal is not important, the research focuses on what the customer does – i.e., how s/he behaves in relation to the brand.

Second, as a two-dimensional concept that incorporates attitude into explaining customer loyalty. Customers may continue to purchase a brand based on what might be considered habitual behavior, which some researchers argue is not true customer loyalty (Dick & Basu, 1994; Felix, 2014). In this two-dimensional model, if the habitual buyer is excluded and we consider only those that buy repeatedly due to deeply held attitudes we gain a more accurate measure of customer loyalty.

Although some researchers consider the latter of these to be the more valid, as it accounts for a more in-depth analysis of customer behavior, there remains a lack of consensus among academics as to which is the superior model (Felix, 2014). This lack of consensus notwithstanding, there are characteristics of loyalty that appear consistently throughout the literature (Felix, 2014; Tabaku & Zerellari, 2015).

First, brand loyalty is recognized as being important given that the costs associated with customer acquisition are typically far higher than are costs associated with branding and marketing programs focused on customer retention (Keller, 1993; Tabaku & Zerellari, 2015). Although exact multipliers vary from source to source, there

is general agreement that firms spend five to seven times as much to acquire a new customer when compared to retaining an existing one.

Second, brand loyalty is “contagious” and customers with high degrees of brand loyalty will share that commitment with other customers, often via word of mouth (McAlexander, Schouten, & Keonig, 2002) as is arguably the case in the closely knit university community. Given the ease of access to universal and instantaneous communication about brand performance and customer satisfaction via social media, this viral component of brand loyalty promises to play a greater role in brand loyalty in the future, especially among Millennials.

Third, loyalty comes in degrees, meaning that customers not only have varying levels of loyalty regarding brands, but that loyalty may vary with time and circumstances. Dick and Basu (1994) found varying degrees of loyalty ranging from True Loyalty, in which case the customer is genuinely committed, to No Loyalty, suggesting the customer will switch brands within a category without any sense of commitment. This may vary with the product category. The consumer may be very adamant regarding which brand of cola they purchase but be relatively indifferent to the brand of chips they purchase at the same time.

Finally, the concept of brand loyalty is closely linked to the customer’s experience with the brand (Tabaku & Zerellari, 2015). The more positive the customer’s past experiences with the brand, the more likely they are to engage in the repeat buying behavior most commonly associated with brand loyalty. The customer forms a relationship with the brand (Felix, 2014) and this relationship withstands changes in

environmental conditions and marketing efforts on the part of the competition (Oliver, 1999).

Given that the market segments of interest in this research, in most cases, will not demonstrate the typical loyalty behaviors of buying the product on a repeated basis, this research seeks to determine if the customer behaviors linked to economic development serve the same purpose(s) in contributing to the HEI's brand equity.

### Business-to-Business Brand Equity

While much of the branding the typical HEIs employs is focused on consumers, most notably students and their parents, equally important to the success of the school is the business-to-business branding in which the institution engages to build relationships with the local commercial and economic communities. The university, a business in all but name, interacts with business leaders, ED professionals, and local civic leaders to sell the institution's "products" to other businesses in their community.

Overwhelmingly, the body of academic branding research has focused on business-to-consumer branding (Biedenbach, 2012), most notably drawing on the work of Aaker (1991; 1996) and Keller (1993; 2003), both of whom focused on customer-based brand equity (CBBE). Sheth and Sharma (2006) note the lack of brand research in the B2B domain, particularly with regard to brand equity. Even were we to disregard the truly foundational pieces in the literature such as Keller (1993), Aaker (1996) and Farquhar (1989) each of which is cited extensively we still find articles with hundreds, if not thousands, of citations such as Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000) with 2401 citations and

Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995) with 1522 citations (note that all citation figures are from Google Scholar effective October 8, 2016).

By contrast, a meta-review of the extant literature by Seyedghorban, Matanda and LaPlaca (2016) analyzing B2B branding publications found that the most frequently cited article was Mudambi's 2002 article with 48 citations, followed by a second article by Mudambi and co-authors Doyle and Wong (1997) with 46 citations. In third place, is Bendixen, Bukasa and Abratt's (2004) survey of decision makers in industrial markets with 45 citations. Despite this lack of attention to the topic, there is support for the importance of branding and brand equity in B2B markets.

Bendixen et al., (2004) suggest that not only does branding have value in B2B exchanges but that, in some cases, firms have enjoyed success in their branding activities. Mudambi (2002) discovered that B2B branding is more important than has generally been recognized and that how customers perceive the firm will, and should, influence management decisions. More recently, Biedenbach (2012) argues that many of the same attributes that drive B2C branding can be applied to B2B, and that brand equity dimensions such as loyalty and image are important and relevant in a B2B setting. Kuhn, Alpert, and Pope (2008) found that the widely accepted Keller model (1993, 2003) had practical and theoretical applications to B2B environments despite the model's original focus on B2C markets.

Despite the lack of extensive B2B brand research (Bendixen et al., 2004; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2007) there is general agreement with Biedenbach (2011) that, as with B2C branding, B2B branding and brand equity is multidimensional and relies heavily on brand

image and loyalty. Similarly, the same emotional and psychological factors that influence B2C branding may play a significant role in B2B branding. As Kotler and Pfoertsch (2007) note, it is not reasonable to expect that commercial buyers turn into completely rational and unemotional people simply because they go to work. Much as consumers may exhibit brand preference or loyalty for emotional reasons, including safety or security (Davicik et al., 2015), commercial buyers may exhibit the same behavior (Mudambi, Doyle & Wong, 1997). As conventional wisdom held during much of the early era of business computing, no one ever got fired for buying IBM.

In their study of firms in the commercial hazardous waste disposal industry, Kuhn, Alpert, and Pope (2008) found that firms that fit Mudambi's (2002) cluster of firms with highly tangible business models tended to be less reliant on emotional components of brand image and more so on physical product characteristics. She and her co-authors note that their findings may lack generalizability to other industry clusters. This suggests yet again that the literature lacks clarity on the B2B branding for firms that offer a purely intangible product, such as higher education.

In examining the relationships between the customers of large accounting firms and their business customers, Biedenbach (2012) found that a multi-dimensional model (awareness, quality, and loyalty) consisting of the same components that we might apply to B2C branding resulted in superior brand equity in B2B settings when compared to a one dimensional model. The author's findings suggest that increased awareness led to more positive associations, leading in turn to higher perceived quality and ultimately an

increase in brand loyalty. These findings are consistent with those found by other researchers.

Kotler and Pfoertsch (2007) recognize the importance of effective B2B communications and advertising in raising brand awareness and that these branding efforts serve the same purpose as they do in B2C settings with regard to helping buyers identify competitive products and distinguish between them. This increased awareness may, in turn, lead to other brand equity benefits for B2B sellers. Gordon, Calantone and di Benedetto (1993) argue that increased brand awareness supports an increase in positive brand associations.

As with several studies in B2C branding (Aaker, 1991; Keller & Lehmann, 2006), B2B research suggests that perceived quality is both part of the brand assets of the firm (Aaker, 1996) and a benefit to the selling firm. Bendixen, Bukasa, and Abratt (2004) found that perceived quality was a primary driver in B2B brand equity and that this equity resulted in B2B buyers' willingness to pay a premium for their preferred brand and an increased willingness to recommend the product to other commercial buyers.

These are both important to the relationships between universities and their stakeholders, as the outcomes of successful B2B branding in the higher education domain are very reliant on networking and word of mouth between the various stakeholder groups.

### Higher Education Branding

Branding, including that associated with higher education, is most often conceptualized as the way in which stakeholders, to include customers and employees

among others, perceive the firm or institution when the name, logo, mascot, or other identity item is seen or heard by customers (Chapleo, 2010; Davcik et al., 2015; Keller, 2003). Gutman and Miaoulis (2003) describe the concept simply in noting that “one way to explore brand image (in the context of higher education) is to simply ask consumers...’What comes to mind when they think they think of the name of your institution?’” They go on to note that this is consistent with the associative nature (p. 106) of the concept as it addresses the idea, found in other branding literature, that image is the result of those perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes is being triggered by some identity item or other node association as described in much of the foundational literature. (Aaker, 1997; Ambler, 1997; Keller, 1993; 2003). In the context of this investigation, what associations are triggered in the stakeholder’s mind when s/he sees the business school’s students, faculty or leadership involved in local economic or business development?

As the size of the higher education industry is significant, the question of these association is important. According to the U.S. Census (Davis & Bowman, 2011), the national 2008 total direct expenditure for higher education was \$461 billion. This sum is approximately six times the total 2015 revenue for America’s largest corporation, Apple, and excludes spending on “peripherals” such as books, travel, supplies and a myriad of expenses with which any parent of a college student is all too familiar. On a more global scale, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimates the market for their member countries at \$1.4 trillion (OECD, 2011) and UNESCO estimates global enrollment at 159 million students (UNESCO Institute for Statistics,

2010). To put this in perspective, it is the equivalent of the entire populations of France and Germany deciding to attend class today.

Given the size of the market, the potential growth as developing countries send more of their children to college and the competition for the best “customers”, it might be reasonable to expect more attention regarding university branding from academic researchers than the literature offers. However, despite considerable expenditures by institutions and attention by practitioners, the branding literature addressing the higher education domain is slight (Waeraas & Solbakk, 2009) and most addresses students rather than the broader scope of product or community branding (Gopalan, Stitts & Herring, 2006). In a review of the literature at the time of publication, Waerass and Solbakk (2009, p. 450) describe the state of branding research in the higher education domain as “very much at a pioneer stage.” Despite a recent special section in the *Journal of Business Research* edited by Hemsley et al., (2016) a review of the available literature suggests there has been scant change in this status. To the contrary, those authors themselves note that research in the domain remains limited.

A possible explanation for this lack of attention in academic research is the embryonic state of HEI branding in practice. While some research suggests there is value in a university’s branding efforts, in some cases identifying the brand as a significant asset and serving to develop a competitive advantage, other research suggests that many branding efforts fall short of success (Chapleo, 2007). While there is little in the literature to explain this lack of attention to brand management among university marketing departments, three factors have some support in the existing research.



First, unlike most organizations that either welcome branding efforts (Apple, for example) or are at worst indifferent, the key employees of many universities resist the institution's branding efforts. Both by academic tradition and policy, control of faculty members' actions and activities is far less than that found in the typical corporation and faculty tend to be very autonomous (Waerass & Solbakk, 2008). In a Norwegian case study (Waerass & Solbakk, 2008) a participant in a Values and Identity workshop stated "I believe they (administration) were thinking almost totalitarian, that we all should march in the same direction, as an organization, and be at management's beck and call. I thought it was a horrid and foolish notion...". Williams and Omar (2014) report a similar view when describing the complexities of university branding, citing the resistance to change, sub-brands (majors and schools) and internal structures as all impeding the development of a consistent and clear brand for the institution. Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana (2006) write of similar attitudes, reporting phrases such as "anathema to higher education", centralized control and a perception of lack of freedom (p. 942).

In most, if not all, corporation employees would accept, as a given, the notion of conforming to a uniform set of behaviors consistent with the firm's image and branding. However, given the independent nature of academics, this may not be the case in universities (Gray, Kim & LLanes, 2003; Waerass & Solbakk, 2008). Arguably, this is exaggerated by the tenure system, which even by the most stringent union standards, allows for a remarkable level of independence from the organization's identity and branding. Chapelo (2010) notes that internal support for the brand is critical to its success

in an HEI environment. However, both research and practitioner experience suggest that this may less, rather than more, common among faculty.

Second, much of the branding in the HEI domain is associated with sports or a “party” environment. In their case study of branding collegiate athletics Clark, Apostolopoulou, Branvold, and Synowk (2009) found that while branding at universities, in general, is often not a high priority that the major dimensions of branding, including awareness and loyalty, were positively influenced by intercollegiate sports. The team’s success on the field, the program’s reputation, star players and well-known coaches all served as antecedents to building successful university brands.

Third, students focus on the university experience rather than the brand, if indeed they perceive one exists. Tan (2001) suggests that in developing brands universities focus on the experience the students will have during their time at the school. A phenomenon with which any faculty member or administrator is all too familiar, students increasingly focus on university amenities such as housing, recreation, and meal services rather than what external stakeholders may perceive as important brand equity qualities such as job preparation or rigorous academics. Ng and Forbes (2009) describe the complexity of the student’s perceptions of the university’s image noting that not all students value the same goals of the institution with some placing higher value on the experience and others on more practical outcomes. This student and parent focus represents a significant part of many institutions’ branding efforts, and while helpful in building a brand image for admissions and campus life managers, it contributes little to the brand equity associated

with the three stakeholder groups which are the focus of this research - employers, economic development professionals, and top-tier alumni.

While much of the student-centric branding in higher education is focused on their lifestyle while on campus (Tan, 2001) and on sports (Branvold & Synowka, 2009) there has been some focus on the role business education plays in building a brand. Khanna et al., (2014) in their investigation of service touchpoints in HEI branding, note that experiential education and “active learning strategies” develop students better prepared for entry into the workforce, and in turn, contribute to creating a brand for the institution.

Despite this focus on students and parents, the inconsistent support of faculty and the lack of academic research on which to base practitioner activity, it is increasingly obvious that not only is HEI branding important (Blewitt, 2010; Chapelo, 2010) but that building university brands may be complex and require more than a single brand image. Waeraas and Solbakk (2009) describe universities as fragmented and not necessarily compatible with a single brand. Do in fact the business school, medical school and football team all require different brands and, if so, what are the unifying elements that bind them together? Further, even among university practitioners and administrators, there may be a lack of agreement regarding what constitutes a successful brand (Chapelo, 2010). The faculty focused on traditional academic values may favor research or teaching, while the fundraising office may be far more interested in how valued alumni perceive the status of the school within the business community (Waerass & Solbakk, 2009). Among the latter, universities’ expanding role as a key driver in economic

development is crucial as it drives not only the brand image but donations, jobs for graduates and research funds (Blewitt, 2010). However, as many faculty find it difficult to reconcile this focus on branding the university as an entrepreneurial entity centered on the business, engineering and sciences schools with the traditional academic emphasis on a broad liberal arts education, gaining support across the campus for building brand equity may be a challenge for the school's marketing staff.

What is evident, as Pinar, Trapp, Girard and Boyt (2014) discuss, is that the university environment does not lend itself to a simple brand, or a one size fits all branding strategy and that multiple stakeholders, including parents, community members, donors, recruiters, and alumni each need to be considered in developing the school's branding strategy and activities. Williams and Omar agree, noting that the brand is important not only to students and alumni, but also to external stakeholders. In their view, the external brand is focused on positioning and marketing, and that this branding is fundamentally different than in other service industries due to crucial role of employees in building the brand, a function they refer to as "brand soul". The importance of this employee-based branding is important to this research as many, if not most, of the activities of interest are dependent on faculty and staff.

#### Higher Education Economic Development.

While the popular business press often focuses on the macroeconomic development issues of global exchange rates, the equities markets, central banks and trans-national trade agreements, much of the country's economic growth is conducted at a local level (Blewitt, 2010) by comparatively smaller organizations (IEDC, 2013).

Rather than examine national or global actors such as the Department of Commerce, Federal Reserve or Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, this research focuses on those economic organizations at the local or regional level and the strategic alliances with HEIs in which they engage.

While an exact tally of the number of such economic development organizations is difficult due to a lack of consensus on what types of organizations to include in the total, anecdotal evidence from within the industry suggests there may be as many as 11,000 local economic development entities. These organizations focus on local job and tax base matters such as workforce improvement, new business development, growing existing firms and firm relocation. They also serve as a conduit through which HEIs and firms might align and form strategic alliances.

Cities and local economies developing around an institution of higher learning are by no means new. No doubt the scholars of Alexandria and Oxford attracted inventors and merchants much like our contemporary Research Triangle and Stanford do today. However, given tightening budgets at both the state and federal levels, the slow recovery from the recent deep recession and the competition for parents' checkbooks, university administrators find themselves pressured to develop relationships with local economic actors, corporations and to promote their institutions and generate donations as never before (Blewitt, 2010; Kalafatis et al., 2016; Stephenson & Yerger, 2013). As noted earlier in this discussion, even the standard bearer for traditional academic-centric research in business schools, the AACSB, has recognized that universities have a need to

better connect to their communities and the economic drivers that make them prosper (Hayes, 2013)

This research takes a view more closely aligned to that of IEDC, which characterizes ED as "...the core topics of globalization, sustainability, entrepreneurship, and economic restructuring. IEDC works with communities and economic development organizations to weave these core topics into pertinent economic development projects, such as community revitalization, business development, and job creation nationwide and abroad" (IEDC, 2013).

As the broad macro issues of economic development such as monetary policy and interest rates are not necessarily relevant to the relationship between HEI's and local development, the discussion below focuses on those activities in which universities engage that do influence local ED. Two types of ED activities are briefly examined; strategic alliances and activities external to the university.

### Strategic Alliances

There is perhaps no more common denunciation of higher education in general, and research focused on the social sciences specifically, than the accusation of living in an ivory tower. While Biblical in origin, the term scarcely suggests the positive image of purity and sanctity intended by its earliest religious connotations. Rather, the term has come to imply that universities are out of touch with the practical needs of the communities in which they operate and with the greater "real world". Although the term has been used in relation to higher education institutions since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it has rarely been employed as vociferously as in recent years. Conservative

radio and television commentators regularly share anecdotes with their listeners that support the notion that universities are not only out of touch with the “real” America but also indoctrinate America’s children with their purported liberal agenda while at the same time providing them a poor foundation for succeeding in the world beyond the walls of the institution. Universities, detractors argue, are poorly positioned both by design and culture, to form key alliances with business.

This might easily be dismissed as low-brow theatre and crass commercialism were the criticism of HEI’s in general, and business schools specifically, restricted to radio show talking heads. However, our own academic researchers find there is evidence to support the charge that educators are not meeting the needs of both our students and the outside business community and that universities are poorly equipped to form alliances beneficial to stakeholders in both entities.

In a report for AACSB, Sullivan (2011) notes that while universities should take a leadership role in business development and innovation, they are frequently relatively ineffective. The manner in which faculty are compensated and promoted often discourages engagement with the local business community (Bacdayen, 2002). Gordon and Jack (2010) suggest that values and structures of the university environment are often the “antithesis” of entrepreneurship. While universities are often the node around which business development occurs, many in academia find the transition to supporting such development challenging (Blewitt, 2010).

In summarizing the findings of the AACSB committee on business school innovation, Robert Sullivan stated the committee’s position clearly and unambiguously –

innovation is critical to the mission of business schools, and business schools hold a unique role in innovation and its contribution to society –“so far, no one is doing this very well” (Sullivan, 2011). The report continues that innovation is a crucial part of economic growth and the well-being of firms and that business schools must “assess their contributions to innovation.”

This is not a novel concept, but coming from what many consider to be the standard bearer for business school excellence it perhaps merits more attention than it has garnered in the past. As early as 1997, Cyert and Goodman in describing the reasons strategic alliances between universities and firms merited attention, cited innovation in products and processes. Alliances have been found to be stepping stones to more complex relationships between universities and firms. There is broad consensus that alliances between universities and corporations offer multiple benefits for both parties (Ahmad & Ingle, 2011; Elmuti et al., 2005; Haskins & Shaffer, 2013; O’Connor, Lynch & Owen, 2011) however most of the work in the field has focused on alliances producing research, patents and new products (Ahmad & Ingle, 2011; Bienkowska, Larsen & Sorlin, 2010; Elmuti et al., 2005).

Frequently, the very activities that would help dispel the ivory tower charge, such as faculty involvement in economic development, recruiting firms for internships and building relationships with local corporations are discounted in favor of scholarly research and publication. The publish or perish academic standard reinforces the perception of those beyond the HEI’s confines that the social and business sciences do little to serve the real needs of the business community or the local community at large



(Blewitt, 2010). Further, this traditional orientation does little to encourage the alliances that help dispel the ivory tower image and bring universities closer to the economic development community and the firms that drive that development.

Strategic alliance has been defined in a number of ways (Elmuti & Kathawala, 2001, 2005, McSweeney-Feld, Discenza & De Feis, 2010; Mellat-Parast & Digman 2007) however most make the distinction between alliances and mergers or acquisitions, an important difference in the context of this research. Most typically, alliances are viewed as a cooperative arrangement two or more firms enter into for their mutual benefit (Moen, Bakas, Bolstad & Pedersen, 2010). Distinct from a merger in which two firms become one and the relative firms may, or may not, maintain their original brands and identities (Wiley, 1995) or an acquisition in which Firm A buys all or parts of Firm B in toto (Scott, 2003), alliance partners typically maintain their individuality and independent brand images (Dodourova, 2009). Elmuti and Kathawala (2001) describe alliances as going beyond the normal inter-company dealings that occur on a day-to-day basis, going on to define the relationship as meeting strategic objectives that are mutually beneficial. Rice, Liao, Martin, and Galvin (2012) take somewhat different perspective viewing alliances as “social and relational arrangements” that allow for exchanges between two or more economic entities.

Further distinctions are made between strategic alliances and other business to business relationships such as buyer-seller (Street & Ann-Frances, 2007; Johnston & Staughton, 2009) or service provider. The latter of these are often less structured and may be quite temporary in nature (Johnson & Staughton, 2009). For example, Delta Airlines

may accept MasterCard for payment, however, that is the extent of the relationship, making the latter no more than a service vendor. The strategic alliance the airline has with American Express is far more complex, exchanging customer data and loyalty marketing programs (Day, 1996). While some alliances may be of a very informal nature, perhaps little more than a handshake, most firms are finding themselves entering into far more formal agreements with complex contracts (Elmuti & Kathawala, 2001). These complexities, and in some cases, the lack of those same complexities lead to both success and failures in alliances, with the latter often the case in efforts between HEIs and ED organizations.

One of the more challenging aspects of ED alliances between firms and universities is the merging of cultures that are often, by their very nature, at cross-odds and contentious (Sandhusen & Budish, 1991). Culture, in the context of alliances, can be defined as a set of shared values and beliefs resulting in behavioral norms and common objectives (Sambasivan & Ching, 2010). The differences in the partners' cultures is a critical success factor in alliances (Emsley, 2006). While firms with widely differing cultures can enjoy short-term success, to survive in the long term, the firms must have compatible cultures (Sambasivan & Ching, 2010). The likelihood of a successful alliance increases with shared cultural values (Murray & Kotabe, 2005).

Pohlman & Gardiner (2000) explain that every firm has a unique culture and that the culture influences how the firm behaves and makes decisions. Making the cultures work between the alliance members may be the hardest hurdle for managers to overcome since, to some degree, it is those very managers who are responsible for the cultures of

the respective organizations (Johnston & Staughton, 2009). Exacerbating this is the tendency for hiring managers and university administrators to hire those that “look” like themselves - a market-driven manager with a strong belief in Friedman style market practices would be reluctant to hire a new manager who espouses Krugman and spent summer break at Occupy Wall Street. Similarly, a university administrator focused on traditional AACSB-style research is less likely to hire a faculty member with a corporate background and an orientation towards external ED and alliances. This was made evident at a recent AMA doctoral special interest group meeting, attended by this researcher, during which the Chair of a nationally recognized marketing department openly dismissed the value of faculty service to the community or that of collegiality between faculty members. Research, he stated, is 70 percent of the department’s hiring criteria and the rest was decidedly secondary.

Thus, organizational cultures become self-reinforcing and take on a life of their own. Worsening this self-reinforcement is a propensity to dismiss those that buck the “establishment”. While culture can be an asset in alliances (Day, 1996) value-driven management principles recognize that a strong culture (not to be confused with a positive one) can inhibit decision making and adaptability to change (Pohlman & Gardiner, 2000). This, in turn, limits the university and firm’s ability to merge cultures successfully and not only prevents alliances from forming but when they are formed, promotes alliance failure.

Research suggests that this paradigm is harmful to multiple stakeholders. In exploring the value of industry/university alliances Elmuti et al., (2005) cite several

justifications for, and benefits of, such cooperative partnerships. In addition to promoting jobs for graduates (and presumably internships as these often go hand-in-glove) the authors describe four “notable reasons” for forming alliances:

Increased competitiveness in a global economy

Growing need for innovation

Reducing R&D expense (and funding for university R&D)

Technology transfer between both parties

Although there is little, if any, direct brand related research, there is some evidence that such alliances may influence the brand of the institution. Aurand, Clair, and Sullivan (2012) describe the cooperative efforts between Ford Motor Company and Northern Illinois University in promoting the firm’s Focus automobile. Not only were student learning outcomes improved, but the university’s visibility in the community also benefitted. At Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, the business school has partnered with the local business community to host an annual business plan competition that attracts schools globally to compete for seed financing totaling over \$200,000 in cash and in-kind services. The program has resulted in the TCU brand being promoted both domestically and internationally as innovative and entrepreneurial.

#### External Activities

There is little disagreement that external activities in which universities engage have an influence on how they are perceived. Elmuti, Abebe, and Nicolosi (2005) note that one of the decisive factors in successful HEI/corporate alliances are the activities in which the institution engages. Knowledge transfer between universities and corporate

partners may also be a critical success factor in establishing the institution as a valid part of the business community (Bicknell, Francis-Smythe & Arthur, 2010). Applied, practical activities such as hosting or sponsoring incubators (Ahmad & Ingle, 2011) and consulting (Weinstein, Nicholls & Seaton, 1992) can also be factors in universities contributing to local economic growth and the image of the school.

One way that HEI's successfully integrate with local development is creating technology transfers between the institution and community stakeholders (Keane & Allison, 1999). Often this transfer occurs in the form of an incubator (Arlotto, Sahut & Teolon, 2011). University supported or assisted incubators also facilitate innovation and development, especially for inexperienced or non-business trained entrepreneurs (McAdam & Marlow, 2008). Perhaps one of the most concrete and actionable forms of economic engagement, incubators provide new firms with not only physical facilities but also with networking, access to technology and the credibility they might otherwise lack (McAdam & Marlow, 2008). Incubators can also provide the critical mass of skills and resources that provide young firms the support needed prior to launch (Bacdayan, 2002).

Incubators have been found to be particularly valuable in promoting economic growth and supporting the relationships between industry and universities (Ahmad & Ingle, 2011; Arlotto, Sahut & Teulon, 2011). Although some incubators operate independently or are directly owned and supported by a government agency, many are associated with universities and to some extent staffed and coached by university faculty and staff. While most, if not all, incubators provide their members with any manner of practical support tools such as offices, shared meeting spaces and office machinery the

true benefits are less tangible, but often more important. Above all else, incubators serve as centers for innovation, knowledge transfer, networking and mentoring (Aernoudt, 2004). Ahmad and Ingle (2011) note that universities may be well suited for this purpose.

Knowledge transfer between researchers and students at the university and the business community has also been seen as both beneficial to all parties and to be a factor in local economic growth. As observed by Blewitt (2010), “if knowledge is the business of education, it is also quite clearly the business of business” (p. 479). MacLeod (2014) proposes an “activist” research agenda at universities that promotes the exchange of information between universities and communities, to the mutual benefit of all parties. Margherita and Secundo (2011) suggest that universities can become part of the extended enterprise and thus be interconnected with the firms in their learning communities. This, they argue, leads to an increased potential for value creation for both parties.

However, despite the consensus that these activities have value, there is far less evidence that as a class of institutions universities are either particularly effective at implementing such programs or that such activities are universally supported by the schools. This may be due in part to a lack of risk tolerance and innovation at many universities. Although universities are frequently viewed as the bastions of independent thinking and originality, they are arguably among the most tradition-bound institutions. Tenure, the industry’s most common method for rewarding performance, is based on traditional concepts of scholarly behavior. Risk taking in the form of innovative teaching is often discounted in favor of research and publication. The primary delivery method in

classrooms, textbooks, and lectures has scarcely changed in two hundred years despite innovations such as interactive whiteboards, avatars, and similar classroom technologies.

While there is very little in the extant literature regarding risk tolerance as a cultural trait in universities or among university management, a 2002 study did reveal that only 22 percent of HEI leaders surveyed described themselves as what might be considered risk tolerant (Cordts, 2003). While that limited pool of leaders responded to the survey as being “trend-setting and highly experimental” the remainder classified themselves as less experimental or conservative and cautious in their management style. Much more recently, Clifford (2015) in a study of international branch campuses found university administrators relatively risk adverse in establishing what corporate America might consider their international offices. This is in stark contrast to many, if not most, American firms that view internationalization as a mission-critical objective.

Universities that fail to develop and implement such external programs may place themselves at a competitive disadvantage as the benefits to both the university and the business community have been clear for some time. Sandhusen and Budish, as early as 1991, noted the need for cooperation between the two communities in workforce development and supporting local economic growth. Far more recently, Shaffer (2015) describes the success of North Carolina’s educational system in turning a “sleepy backwater” into an internationally recognized center for innovation and technology. Thus, determining if, and to what extent, external activities in which the HEI engages contributes to positive brand equity and the benefits that equity offers, may provide both future researchers and current practitioners valuable insights.

## CHAPTER III

### Research Methodology

Chapter III discusses the methodology for this research, to include the methods selected for gathering data, how the data was analyzed and the sampling techniques employed. A justification for each of these is also provided as are brief discussions regarding ethical considerations, the role of the researcher in qualitative methodologies and the role of Delphi studies.

#### Introduction

This research employs a mixed methodology, divided into two distinct, but interrelated, phases. Phase One consists of semi-structured interviews intended to develop broad themes and stories (Creswell, 2013). This technique is often employed where there is a lack of clarity in the extant research regarding the topic under investigation or when the literature is limited (Helmsley-Brown et al., 2016; McAdam & Marlowe, 2008), when the investigator is seeking expert opinions (Bernard, Wutich & Ryan, 2017; Day & Bobeva, 2005) or when large sample sizes are impractical (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the case of this study, all three are applicable.



Phase Two employs a Delphi study which is intended to clarify the themes and seek either consensus or divergence of opinion within the participants as a whole and more narrowly within the three segments (Day & Bobeva, 2005).

In many cases, the early stage of a Delphi study is often characterized as preparatory in nature (Day & Bobeva, 2005; Linstone & Turoff, 2002) and includes, among other factors determining participant profiles, sample sizes and developing the data gathering instrument(s). The actual first round of data gathering is either confirmatory, or as is the case with this study, exploratory in nature. Day and Bobeva (2005) among others (Hanson, Keeney & McKenna, 2000) note that the latter of these is well served by an open-ended questionnaire or “preliminary interviews” (p. 106). In this study that initial data gathering was completed in the Phase One in-person semi-structured interviews. The data gathered in the interviews was then employed as the foundation for two subsequent rounds of Delphi, described in more detail below.

#### Restatement of the Research Questions.

In the interest of clarity and review, the research questions in this study are restated below:

RQ1: In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to the brand equity of the institution as perceived by differing stakeholder segments?

RQ2: In what manner does brand equity, as perceived by three key stakeholder groups, differ as a result of the economic development activities in which the university engages?

RQ 2a) In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to brand equity as perceived by the key alumni segment of the university's stakeholders?

RQ 2b) In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to brand equity as perceived by the major employer segment of the university's stakeholders?

RQ 2c) In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to brand equity as perceived by the economic development professionals segment of the university's stakeholders?

RQ3: In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to the brand image dimension of brand equity?

RQ4: In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to the brand loyalty dimension of brand equity?

RQ5: In what manner does the perceived value of varying types of economic development activities in which the university engages differ among the three stakeholder segments?

#### Phase One: Semi-Structured Interviews

The initial data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with three types of stakeholders (employers, key alumni and local ED professionals) important to the university under investigation specifically and arguably applicable to any institution with a school of business. While there is an increasing pool of research regarding branding in the higher education domain (Drori, Tienari & Waeraas, 2015; Hemsley-Brown et al.,

2016) little, if any, explores the relationships between non-traditional marketing activities employed by the institution and the resulting brand equity. This paucity is amplified when viewed from the perspective of key stakeholders (market segments) and their perception of activities that are external to the university, such as economic development or community building. Consequently, we lack a body of research on which to draw to define and apply to what we might include in a quantitative instrument. As noted in Sections 2.3 (HE Branding) and 2.4 (HE Economic Development) the body of work on these topics remains comparatively slight (Helmsley-Brown et al., 2016; Shaffer, 2015) and many of the prior works in the HEI branding and ED fields are qualitative in nature (Ahmad & Ingle, 2011; Bicknell, Francis-Smythe & Arthur, 2010; MacLeod, 2014).

Thus, a qualitative methodology allows the researcher to “tell the stories” which are revealed in the interviews and, in turn, determine how those themes and narratives are related both to one another and to the research questions (Bernard, Wutich & Ryan, 2017. p. 2). John Creswell, in his widely used “five approaches” text, expands on this notion in describing qualitative research as a “set of material practices that make the world visible” (Creswell, 2013. p. 43). In this investigation that visibility was initially achieved through a series of interviews with three types of stakeholders essential to the university, its faculty and most importantly, to its students. The resulting “visibility” was then amplified and clarified by the Delphi rounds described below. Each of those chosen to participate has a relationship with the university or are engaged in promoting and growing the local economy. In many instances, both apply. Accordingly, this research seeks to provide both academics and institutional managers with insights into how their stakeholders

perceive, and perhaps value, the efforts and investments the schools make in branding and promotion through the analysis of interviews with relevant stakeholders.

#### Justification for the Interview Methodology in Phase One

As an initial data gathering technique for this domain and the research objectives, there are four significant benefits in selecting the qualitative narrative methodology rather than the more commonly accepted quantitative analysis typically found in academic marketing research.

**First**, it allowed for the identification of unexpected themes in the HEI and ED relationships. As the existing literature offers little guidance regarding HEI branding in the B2B context generally (as opposed to branding targeting students and parents) and far less specific to economic development (Helmsley-Brown et al., 2016), there is little foundation for developing a meaningful survey instrument.

Researchers exploring the relationships between HEI and ED have found the narrative technique useful in extracting the unexpected, especially in cases in which semi-structured interviews were employed (Bicknell et al., 2010). The method encourages participants to reveal information leading to what Keane and Allison (1999, p. 897) characterize as the “analytical framework to explore qualitatively the role of higher education institutions.” In the case of this research, that role is not explicit and the interviews supported finding unexpected connections.

McAdam and Marlowe’s (2008) investigation into networking within a British university incubator employed both structured, recorded interviews and informal discussion resulting in the authors developing case studies describing unexpected

relationships between the participants in the incubator. Incubators are one of the more common ways in which HEIs contribute to local economic development, and thus the McAdam and Marlowe (2008) study is relevant to this research. Much as with this research, no survey instrument specific to the domain or topic of interest existed that would have yielded similar results for those researchers.

**Second**, the qualitative interview methodology allowed the stories to help resolve the issue of what activity was responsible for the economic development outcomes. Specifically, this research method helped reveal if the economic development in question occurred due to the HEI's involvement, in part or whole, or if there were alternative causes (Gordon & Jack, 2010). Were this research to rely exclusively on quantitative analysis of the "before and after" states of typical ED benchmarks such as tax revenues and jobs, case examples would likely have been missed and, if found, the factors responsible for the economic development would have been, at best, speculative in nature. For example, while serving on a community task force, one participant identified the pivotal role of a local HEI in securing a new office development in their community. The HEI helped develop the "lead" and the sales proposition that the participant cited as being instrumental in securing the new employer. However, at the same time, the county lowered tax rates in the district, making the land purchase more attractive. Determining quantitatively which of the two (the HEI or the tax reduction) was the decisive factor would have been difficult, even assuming this researcher knew to ask about the event and incorporate relevant questions into a survey instrument.

**Third**, by combining the interviews with documents, printed collateral and web-based promotional materials stories emerged that helped support and enhance the themes revealed in the research. In one case, the ED entity in question used a theme of “the best of both lifestyles” to promote their community. The collateral promoted the business-friendly characteristics of the community (taxes, labor force, permitting) while simultaneously extolling the livability of the area, exemplified by affordable homes, parks and outdoor recreation. The ED practitioner noted what might be considered the spouse factor – the executives in the firm gave weight to their spouses’ preferences in selecting where to site the firm. The spouses believed that having a HEI in the community was beneficial to the community’s livability.

This technique can be found in the work of Gordon and Jack (2010) who examined the social capital resulting from HEI’s interacting with small to medium enterprises. Citing Anderson and Jack (2002), the authors argue that the qualitative method “allows aspects such as social context, social dimensions, dynamic dimensions, interactional aspects, structural elements and detailed appreciations of how networks actually develop over time to be addressed.” The authors discuss employing qualitative methodologies to “build(ing) a picture” (Gordon & Jack, 2010) to better understand the relationships within the organization and the resulting social capital. Gordon and Jack’s (2010) objectives are very similar to those in this research which aims to understand the perceptions (“the pictures”) key stakeholders, including those engaged in economic development, have regarding HEIs.

**Fourth**, as a matter of practicality, executive level managers have a notoriously low response rate to surveys. As this research is targeting a very specific sub-set of managers the pool of prospective participants is rather small, and even a high response rate would yield a small sample size. If quantitative methods had been selected, this sample size limitation would have represented a lack of statistical significance. However, by employing a narrative qualitative methodology, a sample size of 15 interviews is adequate to identify and examine themes supporting the research problems. This research aims to extrapolate the perceptions of a relatively few actors in the ED/HEI community to the comparatively larger influence those actors have on both universities and economic development. Miles and Huberman (1994) support the use of small numbers of participants to reach broad conclusions, noting that “many qualitative studies involve single cases, with few people involved” (p. 35).

The challenge of identifying the stories and themes that support the research questions is further complicated by the requirement that each participant is expert in their field. Unlike much of marketing research, such as brand personality or consumer behavior, in which broad categories of consumers or convenience samples, such as undergraduates, can be used (Aaker, 1997), each of the participants in this study must be either a skilled practitioner in economic development or similarly closely engaged with the HEI, a requirement that did not lend itself well to quantitative sampling. Gordon and Jack (2010) identified the value of using qualitative techniques to select a sample based on expertise or experience, writing “This purposeful sample was selected on the basis that we thought the particular individuals selected would provide interesting examples and

that we could learn about their interactions and what the outcomes and impact of those interactions had been” (p. 523).

The exploratory nature of this investigation, the sample size issue and the need for specific expertise and experience on the part of the participants support both the use of interviews and the second phase of this research, the Delphi study, as discussed below.

### Interview Design and Process

Following IRB approval, 16 interviews were conducted, five each in two of the stakeholder segments included in the study and six in the third (an additional volunteer was accepted). Each interview was approximately one hour in length, and while most were conducted in person, scheduling and travel issues dictated that two were conducted using electronic means. Each was recorded using a digital voice recorder and subsequently transcribed. In keeping with the local focus of the study, most of the participants are geographically located in the Tampa Bay area. One of the alumni participants and one of the ED experts are located outside of the area, however in both cases they remain closely involved with the university and the lack of proximity does not lessen the relationship. Each participant’s individual profile is included in the analysis of the data (see Chapter 4) however, in keeping with the confidentiality and anonymity of the study, code names are employed throughout the paper. This anonymity is a prerequisite for the Delphi study employed in the second phase of the research.

Drawing on the format Day and Bobeva,(2001) employ to describe the Delphi process, Table 2 summarizes the Phase One methodology. Note that a similar table can be found at the end of the following section addressing the Delphi study.



Table 2  
*Phase 2 Methodology*

Criteria	Choice
Purpose of the study	Exploratory, thematic
Number of rounds	One
Participants	15
Mode of Operation	Face-to-face or electronic substitute
Anonymity	Partial (known to the researcher but anonymous in the written study)
Communication media	Recorded and transcribed
Concurrency	Real-time

### Sampling

The sampling method selected for the study was a quota system. In using a quota sample method, the researcher selects the overall population and then determines (1) what subpopulations are needed and (2) how many participants are needed in each (Bernard et al., 2017). These authors note that quota samples are appropriate when the research seeks to determine the differences in the participants' experiences and further, that open-ended interviews serve to elicit those experiences. A comparable strategy can be found in Miles and Huberman which describes stratified purposeful sampling as allowing for comparing subgroups (1994, p. 28). As this research sought to compare and contrast the brand perceptions of three subgroups of stakeholders, this sampling technique was well suited to that objective.

The population of interest are stakeholders important to the success of the institution generally and specifically to the branding initiatives in which the university

engages relevant to economic development. In turn, this population was subdivided into three segments:

1) *Economic development specialists*. This group are those individuals working in the HEI's geographic area that are professionally engaged in promoting economic growth. This includes individuals with experience managing incubators, loan funds, and supporting business startups as well as government officials and local business leaders.

2) *Engaged alumni*. This group consists of alumni that are actively engaged with the university. To qualify, the individual must do more than donate; they must take an active role in the institution which might include serving on the Board, President's or Dean's Council, leading alumni associations or mentoring students.

3) *Key employers*. This group are those employers that are active in recruiting students, attend campus job fairs, have internships/externships or participate in classes or student organizations. In some cases, members of this group also serve as student mentors or career coaches.

In order to be included in the sample, the participants agreed to devote no less than one hour to the interview, allow the results to be used in this and subsequent studies and allow those studies to be submitted for publication.

### Coding

Following transcription, the interview results were manually coded. Manual coding was selected due to (1) the small sample size and (2) the time required for computerized coding due to the steep learning curve.

## First Cycle Coding

The first cycle coding methodology draws on that suggested by Bernard et al., (2017), who in turn followed the guidance suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Charmaz (2002). Coding was conducted in two phases. The first phase sought to identify key concepts or themes that repeat in the text of the interviews, a process variously called open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) or initial coding (Charmaz, 2002). The objective in this phrase, as expressed by Bernard et al., (2017) is to fragment the data into “conceptual components” (p. 225). This supplies the researcher with the foundation for identifying and analyzing themes emerging from the interviews.

The use of this coding technique is reinforced in the work of Soldana (2013) when he notes that research questions of an epistemological nature, such as “what factors influence” a given outcome or “how does...” one thing influence another (p. 61) are well suited to initial coding. As does Bernard et al., (2017) Soldana draws on the work of Charmaz (2006, 2014) in stating that initial coding allows the researcher to “break down” the data into specific parts and look for relationships in the codes (p. 100). He further notes that initial coding is not necessarily “formulaic” (p. 100) and is often open-ended. This opened ended characteristic was useful in the context of this work because, as anticipated, the interviews went in unexpected directions, despite the semi-structured questions.

This leads us to an interesting synthesis of two first cycle methods of coding. Soldana discusses the use of in vivo coding as being of particular use in “action and practitioner research” (p. 91). Although often employed in research examining particular

cultures or sub-cultures, the application is also useful when the researcher wants to, as Soldana (2013) phrases it, “honor(s) the participant's voice” and use the language of the culture. As this research is examining the attitudes of a very specific set of working professionals (note that even in the case of the alumni segment, all are working business professionals) it was expected that not only would the research reveal common codes and theme, but that those codes would be expressed in common terms and language of the “economic development sub-culture” under study. This indeed proved to be the case and some elements of in vivo coding will be evident in the analysis found in Chapter 4.

### Second Cycle Coding

Axial coding, the second step in the text analysis, allowed for the research to identify links and relationships between the categories identified in the initial coding. For example, some activities in which the HEIs engaged are relevant to more than one theme. An example of this is the story of the students assisting with the community research in Dade City. This activity influenced two of the themes, thus providing a link between Function and Presence as discussed in Chapter IV. Bernard et al. (2017) suggest the objective of axial coding, again drawing from previous work by Strauss and Corbin (1998), is to determine how the categories of concepts might be related to, and support, larger concepts. In turn, this allows for the identification of themes.

### Phase Two: Delphi Study

Once the interviews, and subsequent coding, were completed the second phase, a Delphi study consisting of two rounds, commenced.

## Introduction

Initially developed by the Rand Corporation to support national security and military decision making during the Cold War of the 1950s and 1960s, Delphi is based on using experts to reach a consensus of opinion, or in some cases, to determine that no such consensus exists (Day & Bobeva, 2005). Given its common application in academia for the social sciences and in healthcare by both academics and practitioners, there is no small measure of irony that the original purpose of the methodology was to determine how best to conduct a nuclear war with the Soviet Union (Linstone & Turoff, 2002, p. 10). Despite its military and national security roots, the technique has been employed in a number of studies in various academic domains, including marketing. Hayes (2007) used a Delphi study consisting of 20 panelists to investigate the future of marketing of higher education. To be clear, his study is not about teaching marketing or theoretical academic research. Rather it is, as is this research, focused on marketing and branding the actual institution itself. As is the case in this study, Hayes selected experts in the discipline and applied their expertise to reach consensus on his research question.

As was the case with the initial Rand study, the most important objectives of a Delphi study are to identify broad concepts that may lack support in the extant literature or knowledge base, refine those concepts via iteration and quantification and reach some measure of consensus among anonymous experts in the field under study (Linstone & Turoff, 2002). Consistent with much of the literature, Story, Hurdley, Smith, and Saker (2002) identify four important characteristics of Delphi studies (p. 489):

*Anonymity:* Although the researcher knows, and will interact with, the experts participating in the study unlike other qualitative investigative techniques such as focus groups, the participants remain anonymous from one another.

*Iteration:* Delphi consists of multiple rounds, each of which builds on the data gathered in the previous rounds. This allows for refining the concepts and reaching common ground among the participants.

*Feedback:* In each iteration, the researcher consolidates and refines the concepts and provides the participants with feedback in the subsequent round(s).

*Aggregation:* The data gathered from the experts in the series of rounds is consolidated, or aggregated, and the findings used to answer the research questions posed by the researcher(s).

Typically conducted in a series of “rounds” or phases ranging from as few as two, as is the case in this study, to as many as ten (quite rare) the Delphi method might be thought of as a funnel. At the top of the funnel, or initial phase, the researcher often employs some type of unstructured, qualitative instrument to gather broad concepts and themes regarding the subject matter under study (Story et al., 2001). As these authors note, this allows the participating experts to “identify and elaborate the pertinent issues” (p. 498). In this study, that role was filled by the in-person (or person-to-person electronic) semi-structured interviews discussed above. This “stage one” interview technique can be found in other Delphi studies (Linstone & Turoff, 2002; Day & Bobeva, 2005).

In subsequent rounds (the middle of the funnel) the experts respond to more specific questions or scenarios in order to more narrowly define the themes and concepts discovered in the initial round. In these latter rounds, as is the case in this study, a quantitative instrument is employed allowing the researcher to refine, rank or group the participants' responses. This intermediate phase(s) also allow the participants to reconsider their earlier answers (Story et al., 2002). In most cases, including this research, the ideal outcome of this middle round(s) is to reach some measure of consensus among the participants (Day & Bobeva, 2005).

For example, as noted in the literature review in Chapter 2, there are several common activities in which HEIs take an active role, including incubators, consulting, research, internships and leadership roles in Chambers of Commerce or other ED organizations. As these activities were supported in the interview findings, a questionnaire asked the participants to rate, on a scale of Likert type scale of 1 to 7, the relative value of each activity. This allowed the research to proceed to the second (and in the case of this research, final) round, as described below. This technique is similar that employed by Hayes (2007) in his Delphi investigation of higher education marketing in which he employed two rounds, noting that a third might be employed but opting to constrain his research to two as he reached his desired outcomes.

At the bottom of the funnel, the concepts are aggregated or consolidated, allowing the researcher to achieve consensus among the participating experts regarding the research questions, and in some case, construct a perceptual model (Story et al. 2002; Day & Bobeva, 2005; Linstone & Turoff, 2002). This aggregation allowed this research

to identify which activities are most valued and if those evaluations vary within the three segments. In the second, and final, round the participants ranked a smaller group of activities to reach a consensus.

This funnel perspective is displayed in Figure 1 below.

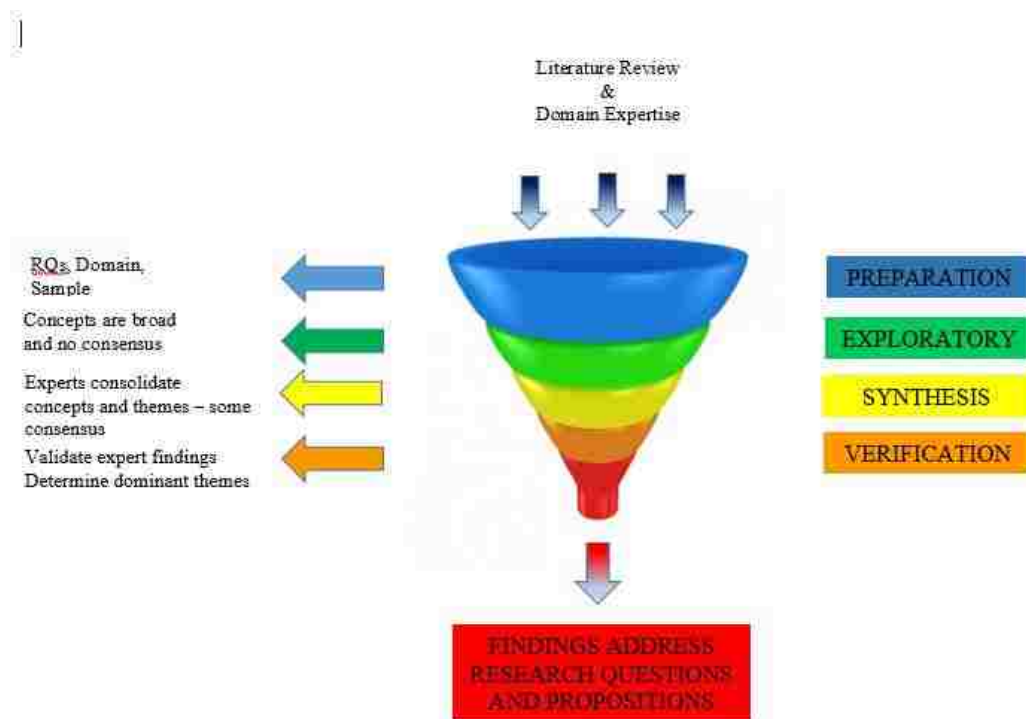


Figure 1. *The Delphi process*. Funnel image retrieved from Google images June 6, 2017  
[https://www.google.com/search?q=funnel+images&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjwtw962wKnUAhUGSSYKHUpHBIoQsAQIIQ&biw=1366&bih=599#imgdii=wBJJ460MF-AyHM:&imgcr=2Yx3u\\_RDO0ZgMM:&spf=1496761875060](https://www.google.com/search?q=funnel+images&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjwtw962wKnUAhUGSSYKHUpHBIoQsAQIIQ&biw=1366&bih=599#imgdii=wBJJ460MF-AyHM:&imgcr=2Yx3u_RDO0ZgMM:&spf=1496761875060)

#### Justification for the Delphi study

In reviewing the literature, there are five qualities of a Delphi study that supported adopting the methodology for this research.



The research question(s) in the study do not lend themselves to typical analytical methodologies but may benefit from expert consensus (Linstone & Turoff, 2002). This is supported both in the literature regarding HEI branding and economic development (Gordon & Jack, 2010; Miles & Huberman, 1994) and in that regarding Delphi studies in which specific research questions are best addressed by experts in the field under investigation (Kelly, 2007).

*Large sample sizes are impractical or unavailable, as is the case in all three of the segments being addressed by this research.* This issue is found in other research involving HEIs and economic development (Gordon & Jack, 2001) and is frequently noted in the Delphi methodology literature (Day & Bobeva, 2005; Linstone & Turoff, 2002; Story et al. 2002). Multiple researchers have noted that one advantage of Delphi studies is the ability to conduct a study with very small sample sizes. (Day & Bobeva, 2005; Linstone & Turoff, 2002;).

*The expertise required to address the research questions cross over multiple fields of practice.* In the case of this research, while the focus is on the relationships between ED and brand equity in the HEI domain, the experts come from several fields outside either sector as members of two of the segments, employers and alumni, are employed in any one of a number of industries. Hsu and Sanford (2007) note that not only is the use of experts with specific knowledge of the subject necessary but that individuals who are “primary stakeholders with various interests related to the target issue or research effort” are important (p. 3).

*In person group meetings are not feasible due to cost, time, location or the participants' schedules* (Hsu & Sanford, 2007; Linstone & Turoff, 2002:). Although most of the participants for this research are located in the Tampa Bay area, some (especially the alumni) are geographically dispersed. Even were that not the case, as busy working professionals getting even two or three of them in the same place, at the same time, proved to be prohibitive.

*There is a lack of historical data and/or research in either, or both, the academic or practitioner literature* (Linstone & Turoff, 2002). As noted extensively in both Chapters 1 and 2, one of the justifications for this research is that despite the impact both economic development and higher education have on the economy and society, both locally and nationally, the domains, especially as they apply to branding, remain largely unexplored (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016).

### Delphi Process

Although in some rare cases Delphi methodology may have as many as ten rounds, two to three is more common and, in most cases, will yield the desired results (Linstone & Turoff, 2002). Consequently, this investigation employed two rounds subsequent to the initial interviews described above. Day and Bobeva (2005) employ this modification of the traditional Delphi process, stating that they (the interviews) are “seen primarily for addressing the weaknesses arising from the unstructured polling of participants' views, by replacing this initial collection of opinions with synthesis of key issues identified in the literature or through preliminary interviews with selected domain experts” (p. 106). Preparing for the interview stage employed in this study also fulfilled

the requirements of the initial “Exploration” phase suggested by Story et al., (2001) which calls for defining the problem, identifying domain and expert participants and gathering exploratory data, which may include structured and semi-structured techniques (see Figure 1, p. 497). Thus, it is important to note that Round 1, as described below, followed the initial interviews, which replaced the more common circulation of a list of predefined questions to the participating experts (Day & Bobeva, 2005).

Round One, which Story et al., (2001), among other researchers (Linstone & Turoff, 2002; Day & Bobeva, 2005), characterize as the synthesis phase, synthesizes and consolidates the expert opinions gathered in the initial research phase (the interviews) into a quantitative feedback instrument. A Likert scale type questionnaire was provided via Qualtrics to the participants consisting of questions intended to address the research questions. Based on the responses received in the interviews, the scale questions determined their level of awareness of the HEI with regard to economic and community development, asking the participants to rate the importance of various ED activities and share their perceptions of the HEI relative to the ED activities revealed in the interviews. The responses were analyzed as noted in Story et al., (2001).

The use of Likert scaling is supported by the meta-study conducted by Giannarou and Zervas (2014) who found that in 29 of the 32 studies they examined the Likert scale method was employed. The studies covered a number of disciplines and included research conducted in Europe, the United States, Asia, Africa and Australia. In 18 of the 32 studies the number of participants was less than 30, and in most cases two to three rounds were employed.

Round 2 served to consolidate and “funnel” the outcomes of the first round (Story et al., 2001) and allows the participants to alter their opinions based on the feedback from the researcher (Linstone & Turoff, 2002). In this final phase, the research seeks to reach a consensus among the participants on most, if not all, of the key issues. This phase also allows participants a final opportunity to contribute comments, observations or justifications for their positions (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2003). In this second phase, the number of items in the survey was reduced from thirteen to five, based on the frequency that the item was rated by the participants with a mean of 6.0 or greater for all questions in the survey as shown in the table below.

Table 3  
*Item Response Frequency Above 6.0*

	Alumni	Employer	ED	Total
Internships	4	5	4	13
Pro-bono faculty consulting	1	1	4	6
Incubators		3	1	4
Student volunteerism	0	0	0	0
Faculty participation	3	4	3	10
Workforce development	2	4	4	10
Student consulting	1	3	2	6
Campus arts and culture	1	0	2	3
Entrepreneurial education	4	2	5	11
Small business development	4	2	5	11
Student/alumni interaction	1	0	1	2
Promoting/advertising the university	1	0	1	2
Leadership visibility/involvement	4	4	4	12
Segment totals	26	28	36	

The participants were also provided with text entry fields to provide optional clarification.

As in the first iteration, a questionnaire is employed, and a request to participate was distributed via email to the participants. The survey was administered via Qualtrics.

Table 4 below summarizes the Delphi process proposed for this study (Day & Bobeva, 2005; Story et al., 2001).

Table 4  
*Summary of the Delphi Process*

Criteria	Selection	
	Phase One	
	Purpose	Exploration
Number of rounds	One	
Participants	Three segments (15 participants)	
Mode	In person (face to face)	
Communication method	Interviews (recorded and transcribed)	
Instrument	Semi-structured interview questionnaire	
	Phase Two	
	Purpose	Synthesis
Number of rounds	One	
Participants	Three segments (15 participants)	
Mode	Remote	
Communication method	Email	
Instrument	Quantitative questionnaire (Likert scale)	
	Phase Three	
	Purpose	Verification
Number of rounds	One	
Participants	Three segments (15 participants)	
Mode	Remote	
Communication method	Email	
Instrument	Quantitative questionnaire (rankings)	

### Ethical Considerations

While Miles and Huberman (1994), among others such as Creswell (2013) note any number of ethical concerns specific to qualitative research the nature of this research is such that ethical implications are minimal. Miles and Huberman (1994) note the need for informed consent and that the participants are fully able to understand the nature of the research. In the case of this research, the participants were informed of the nature of the research in the solicitation email (see Appendix D) and each is a well-educated, working business professional. The intended use of the data to be gathered in the research was fully disclosed.

Creswell notes the potential issues involved with gaining permission from the relevant institutions, from the organizations used in the study as well as the individuals themselves. In the case of the former, IRB approval was obtained from both institutions with which the researcher is affiliated. In the case of the latter, all the participants are sufficiently senior in their organizations that they are able to grant access to the facility and permission to conduct the research.

Both sources (Creswell, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 2013) note the need for assessing risk and potential harm. Given the nature of the data collection method, the characteristics of the participants and the full disclosure this issue is minimized and presents little to no ethical concerns.

Similarly, all the authors cited above express the need for data security and protecting the anonymity of the participants. The data collected in this research is stored on two password-protected computers and backed up to an encrypted portable drive,

stored in a digital safe. The participants are identified in the analysis discussed in Chapter IV by pseudonyms, such as ED1, for Economic Developer One.

In closing on this topic, while ethical research practices are always worthy of attention in any dissertation, and especially in this case given the close relationships between the participants and the researcher's home university, given the situation as described above this researcher believes that the ethical concerns are minimal and have been appropriately addressed.

#### Data Gathering Processes

The solicitation of participants and data gathering process was as follows.

A pool of approximately 30 potential participants was identified, representing members from each of the three segments under investigation. The list was prioritized to identify those believed to be most likely to provide quality data and for their competence as subject matter experts. Of those selected as 'first choices', all 16 agreed to participate. This provided the research with one additional participant beyond the 15 required.

The initial contact with the prospective participants was by an "informal" email invitation requesting their participation. The email introduced the researcher (when necessary, in some cases we were already acquainted) and described the nature of the research request. The follow-up email, more formal in nature, included specifics regarding the process, what would occur during the interview and how the data would be handled and safeguarded. This communication also addressed the issue of confidentiality. A copy of the informed consent document was attached to this email.

Scheduling was accomplished via a Doodle app (<https://beta.doodle.com/>). While a bit informal in nature, the application worked well and all 16 interviews were scheduled within a few days. All 16 interviews were completed in less than two weeks.

Twelve of the interviews were conducted at the participant's place of business, two were conducted on the researcher's home campus, and two were conducted by phone due to geographic constraints. A copy of the informed consent was collected at the time of each interview.

Each interview was recorded on two digital audio recorders. Immediately following each interview, the file was saved to multiple devices and sent to the transcription service. Turnaround time was typically two to three days.

Each participant received a follow-up email with a day thanking them for their participation. A second email was sent following the completion of the interviews reminding all of them of the pending Delphi questionnaires. In several cases, the participant acknowledged the email and confirmed their intent to reply to the questionnaire.

Following the completion of the Delphi study, each participant was sent a handwritten note on [School 1] notecard stock thanking them for their participation.

Once the study is complete, the recordings (on a portable drive) will be secured in the researcher's personal home safe and the paper transcriptions will be shredded by the university's service.

Copies of the interview questions, IRB approvals, informed consent, and emails can be found in the appendices.



## CHAPTER IV

### Analysis and Presentation of Findings

#### Introduction

As described in the previous chapter, this is a qualitative study conducted through the application of 16 semi-structured interviews with three segments of stakeholders in the higher education and economic development communities. The primary research interest is the impact that activities related to local economic and business development conducted by universities have on the brand equity of the institution. For example, if the institution in question sponsors an incubator or has an aggressive, proactive internship program what, if any, influence do those activities have on the university's brand equity? The dimensions of brand equity under investigation include brand image and loyalty. Also of interest was the participants' expert opinion on the role these activities played in promoting the university's brand.

Thus, the unit of analysis is the perceptions of the participants on these dimensions of brand equity as expressed in the interviews.

Data was collected via the interviews and analyzed using a hybrid of initial and in vivo coding as described by Soldana (2013) and drawing on the work of Charmaz (2014), Miles and Huberman (1994), Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Bernard et al., (2017). Manual coding was selected due to the relatively small sample and the learning curve associated with computerized coding applications.

A second phase was conducted employing a two-round Delphi study, as described by Linstone and Turoff (2002) and Day and Bobeva (2005). Delphi is appropriate for clarifying the consensus between subject matter experts (Story et al. 2002; Day & Bobeva, 2005).

Thus, this chapter is divided into two sections. The first addresses the themes revealed in the interviews and the research questions. The second examines the results of the Delphi study. The first section is organized as follows:

1. A table describing the participants with a representative sample of their codes (quotes)
2. A discussion of the four major themes revealed in the interviews with sample quotes
3. A discussion of the research questions with relevant codes
4. A summary and closing

### Participants

Table 5 displays the participants, grouped by segment, and includes a brief description and a representative sample of their quotes. While the interview was designed to be completed in approximately 60 minutes, and in some cases was right on schedule, many of the participants became very engaged in the process and added to the time. The time of each interview is noted in the chart.

Table 5  
*Summary of Participant Information*

Identifier	Profile	Interview time (minutes)
ED1	Male, mid-60s, 40 years in regional ED, extensive experience in HEI partnerships; MBA and MS	104
ED2	Male, late 60s, background in K12 education, 35-year history in community involvement, active on several Boards, currently local aide to U.S. Congressman; BA and MA	67
ED3	Male, 40s, 20 years in ED, currently President and Executive Director of a regional EDC, actively involved with HEIs in Tampa Bay; BA and MBA	61
ED4	Female, 50s, industry background, active on several Boards, involved with local HEIs, current mayor of central Florida county seat; BA and MA (Ivy league)	89
ED5	Female, 50s, background in banking and transportation, currently Director of Business development for rapidly growing central Florida county, BA	84
ED6	Male, late 60s, 40 years in higher education, formerly provost of state college, active in several boards, currently retired but serves in several leadership roles for local ED and job development; BA, MA, and Ph.D.	63
E1	Male, mid-60s, 40 years in banking and finance, currently president of a regional credit union; BA and MBA. Employs several [SCHOOL 1] graduates, history of working with student groups, launching first intern program in 2017	70
E2	Female, early-30s, senior member of regional PR firm; BA and MA; extensive history of hiring interns from [SCHOOL 1] and other state universities, regular speaker on campuses, has hired students for national sports and entertainment events and serves on [SCHOOL 1] industry council	74
E3	Male, mid-60s, 45-year history in banking and commercial lending, currently president of a regional bank; BA and MBA. Extensive history with interns, has hired [SCHOOL 1] and [School 2] graduates, is a regular speaker on campus and is involved with several student organizations as a mentor and for class projects.	63
E4	Male, mid-60s, 40-year history in tourism, hospitality industry, ED; current executive director of Chamber of Commerce in small central Florida county seat, active with local HEIs. History with interns, referred several local students to full-time positions, his Chamber has history of paying student groups for community projects.	61
E5	Female, mid-50s, history as corporate and HEI attorney, training in human resources, currently VP of HR for a regional nationally recognized zoo. E5 has an extensive history of hiring interns and has hired students/recent graduates for both seasonal and permanent positions.	60
A1	Female, late-30s, MBA from [SCHOOL 1], banking, finance background, was executive director of local incubator, current director of San Antonio, TX incubator	54
A2	Male, mid-50's, received his BA and MBA from [SCHOOL 1], currently communication and government relations director for regional power generation company, active in local politics and non-profits.	73
A3	Male, received his BA from [SCHOOL 1], chair of alumni board, mid-60s, 40 years banking and commercial lending, currently in commercial real estate in Gulf Coast city	77
A4	Male, late 20s, received his BA from [SCHOOL 1], NCAA athlete, serves on alumni board and on school of business industry council, currently partner in national commercial video company	75
A5	Male, 50s, received his BA from [SCHOOL 1], serves on alumni board and President's council, background as PIO for major metropolitan police department, currently regional director of communications for national telecommunications and cable firm	92

### Representative Coding by Participant and Segment

One significant advantage of employing interviews in qualitative methodology is the ability to leverage the expertise of the participants to reveal the unexpected stories and themes in the subject matter being investigated (Bernard et al., 2017; Creswell, 2013). This is particularly helpful in cases in which there is a limited extant body of knowledge (McAdam & Marlowe, 2008) as is the case in this study of HEI branding (Helmsley-Brown et al., 2016).

Further, as this study is interested in the differences between the three segments under study, how each of them respond to the questions is of particular importance. Previous research in branding is in general agreement that different segments will perceive a given brand differently holistically and, more specifically, have differing opinions regarding any given attribute or characteristic of the brand (Dick & Basu, 1994; Felix, 2014).

Thus, it is important that readers of this work “get to know” the participants. The codes below are organized by segment and will introduce each participant, thus providing a helpful context for the more detailed codes provided in the discussion of the thematic analysis and the codes addressing the research questions. Note that as anonymity was promised, the participants are identified by a pseudonym (i.e., ED1 or A3)

#### Economic Development Professionals

The ED professionals were the most consistent in their responses. This is likely attributable to their common perspective of the business environment and the context of

the interviews. Despite considerable variability in their actual professions (politics, chamber of commerce, ED council officers, academia) their commonality is that each is focused on local economic development and the quotes below reflect that view of the world.

Due to an unexpected response to interview requests, there are six, rather than five, participants included in the results. The profile of each can be found in Table 5, above.

ED1: This participant brought an interesting perspective to the study in that he has served in senior ED roles in communities as diverse as Scottsdale, Arizona and Pasco County, Florida. The former is fairly affluent while the latter is still semi-agrarian and lower income, however it also has one of the highest growth rates in the state. He has been active with HEIs throughout his career.

The impact of HEIs on local ED:

*“I think from the community and to a lesser extent regional perspective. Having a university is a great addition. That creates a marketing ability, it creates an addition to the product offering that you have to offer as a community marketer. Why is that, well because you have research sources, you've got a source of talent, you've got a better quality of life because of what the universities typically offer in terms of bringing in arts and music and lectures and writers and all that sort of thing.”*

The role of “integration” on the brand image:

*“Often times universities have programs that don't have much to do with the university because I am with the local community because they're international or international in scope and it doesn't really depend on locality. I think that degree of connectedness is important.”*

The role of students on image and brand:

*“They have student interns that can provide assistance, we’ve done it with St. Leo. That gives you sort of extra help to do things. You can farm out research projects to both students and faculty.”*

ED2: This participant is unique as he spent most of his career in K-12 education and as a leader in a semi-rural community which is now evolving into a more suburban environment. He now serves on the staff of a U.S. Congressman.

The role of integration:

*“That’s probably the easiest question we’ve tried to deal with, because what you’re seeing today, whether it’s universities, whether it is state colleges, community colleges, those institutions no longer feel as though they have to offer their services behind the ivory walls. They take it to the business, to the ground, to the point of service, to offer the services, and that-- when I say colleges, that’s broad -- are taking their offerings direct to the employer and entering into partnerships to do that.”*

*“I want to come back to something we said, I’d started to say earlier. One of the neat things that I see taking place is the cooperation in this area between the offerings of PHSC and ability to transition to [School 1] and cooperative partnership opportunities that exist there, including with other business entities, institutional entities within the county.”*

The importance of HEI’s in ED recruitment:

*“I think in the Tampa Bay area, the business community at large, whether it Port Tampa or whether it’s Raymond James has the perception that the education being offered in the Tampa Bay area is highly attractive to business relocating here because the offerings are in place. If the corporation needs something offered, they can get it quickly. That’s why one of the reasons the business climate of greater Tampa Bay area is in vastly better shape than business communities in other places.”*

ED3: Much like ED1, this participant is a career ED professional with experience throughout the U.S. and is active in Florida international trade. He is relatively new to the central Florida area and thus brings a different perspective.

The impact of HEIs on ED:

*“Businesses within the economic development realm, a lot of especially small businesses don't necessarily have that same ability to do that, and don't have maybe the training, the technique, the sophistication, to be able to say, "Here's where we want to be in 5 or 10 years," and actually make it happen. But universities, probably because of the individuals that they employ, are built to make those sorts of things happen. They are programmed to make that sort of thing happen.”*

On the relative effectiveness of one HEI brand over another:

*“Couple of things come to mind on that, one is, again, as a member of the business community who, again, wanted to do business with the university, it just was a very difficult and almost closed situation where-- there is not a central point of contact or a central theme, or the mission of the university, there was no aspect in there that it was going to be assisting the economic development of the local community.”*

On the idea of HEI integration into the business community:

*“I think that's the measure of success, when it just becomes part of the family and part of the whole community and the business development side, you don't even think about it, just becomes automatic.”*

ED4: This participant is among the more unique in the pool. Educated in Ivy League schools in New England she chose to relocate to rural Florida with her physician husband, and subsequently became involved in local politics. She is now mayor of a small community in the bay area.

On the importance of presence in local ED:

*“Whether we're trying to set up a new business center to attract a certain type of clientele or type of business, it is nice to always be able to show them the surrounding data. I think that's something that we, and I'm just going to use Dade City as an example right now, has struggled with not really -- that hasn't been our -- we haven't been able to substantiate in the past so now, I think having a relationship with a university or any type of educational center helps us to provide that accountability and that validity to things that we're trying to move forward with in doing.”*

The role of the integration theme to local ED:

*“I think access is probably the first thing, whether it's-- can be that I can drive five minutes down the road or I can click on my computer and be having a conversation with you. I think specialty or expertise in a particular area and just-- I think those are the two things for me. Just be able to-- if I know that I'm going to have to wait four months to get into-- I think access and area of expertise would be the two that I'm going to look for. I'm thinking even here in projects that we've done, we've stayed pretty much in the local community.”*

ED5: This participant is the only one that is employed directly by local government in an ED role. She is active in local tax and transportation policy.

On the contribution of HEI resources to local ED:

*“Or, I think they're an attractor for actually business resources that in my experience with working different universities in different areas of the nation, it's who do you go to first if you need more than what your local ED agency would have in terms of resources? I would go to the University for research librarians are such an awesome tool. They are very underutilized when you're looking at different markets you want to go into.”*

On the theme of HEI integration:

*“If they are the innovator of their industry and all of a sudden they pop up in the middle of nowhere, there's a reason why they located to that area. Maybe they are 45 minutes to this university, 20 minutes to that university. But there was a reason outside of cheap land or workforce availability. They have to have that connection to the intelligence community [laughs] and academia in order to justify a stake there and maybe start a cluster of their own.”*

ED6: This participant is unique in that he is the only ED representative with an extensive background in higher education as well as economic development. He is retired from academia, but serves on several ED boards, chambers, and development councils.

On the idea of the university as a partner:



*“There are always going to be a need to know something you don't know, maybe you need to move the economics in town, or maybe there's some potential new business that you really don't have or workforce to support or whatever. Communities have a need for somebody who have expertise in finding out new things to help them do that. Examples are, of course, when we needed something in Dade City we said, “[name redacted] John, can you help us with this stuff in Dade City?” You said, “I've got some students and these students are going to be doing research. I bet you they could help you.” They have helped.”*

Regarding the image of the HEI by local small business:

*“That group has a positive image. That group looks at universities as a place that provides this continuing source of currency if you will, information currency in their community. I think they're all positive. You meet very few people that don't, I have in my life, but not too many.”*

How the ED community perceives the image of the university:

*“Well, first, there are a number of times we sit around the table and brainstorm to come up with some kind of a question and you say, “Well, gosh. I don't understand that.” I wonder if anybody understands that and then usually, in Dade City anyway, it won't be long before [School 1] is brought up because I'll say, “Well you know, particularly this (faculty name redacted) guy, he has these students that they're always trying to learn things. He's trying to find something relative for them to learn and it may be that he can hook that learning experience to solving your problem.””*

On brand loyalty to the HEI:

*“I think it's really simple and is the same as it would be for any other business. They must have a good experience when they interact with the university in some way. As long as I have that good experience, you have the disposition to have a favorable influence. If something happened though, and they had something negative, whatever it may be, then that's the challenge to overcome.”*

#### Employer Participants

Employers demonstrated more variation in their responses than did the economic development professionals. This is not surprising as the employer segment was far less homogeneous than the ED segment. As noted above, the ED professionals, despite some variation in their actual profession, are focused on local economic development.

Conversely, the employers represent a very broad spectrum of industries with considerably different education and professional perspectives. The common element was their employment of university interns and recent graduates.

E1: This participant played a unique role in the interviews as he is active in local ED in his professional capacity as a regional banker and lender. However, in his role as a local employer he has hired recent graduates and supports his employees in attending college. His firm has hired student consulting students, in a paid capacity, to perform research for a rebranding project.

Regarding the impact on local business growth:

*“I would think what that makes possible is, number one, it's providing opportunity for local citizens both to get an education and to have access to expertise that maybe wouldn't ordinarily be there if it wasn't for the University being in the presence of the community. It also brings people from outside the area to study here. May cause them to stay here and contribute to the area and help it to grow and to support local businesses.”*

On the direct impact of the university on hiring:

*“It's got an MBA program, and as we grow, there are going to be graduates of that that might look at working at this credit union. We're getting a little bigger now and worked to where we probably can be competitive for starting pay and even for opportunity to advance for people like that. It gives them something to look at, and it gives us a source of professional expertise to hire, to manage and operate this place as a local business person, that's what I see.”*

E2: This participant is one of two younger professionals in the study. She is a director of a regional PR firm, with clients in the entertainment and media industries. Her firm has a history of hiring local interns and she is a regular speaker at [School 1], where she also serves on an advisory council. She brings a somewhat younger and media savvy perspective to the study.

On the importance of interacting with the business community on the HEI brand:

*“I think that that's always helpful, although it's difficult to implement. But I do think that having an -- In a specific sense of [School 1] to have that Advisory Council that continuously looks over the materials and has speakers coming, and talk to the students; it gives them a little bit more of a real-world application to the thing that they're doing, so that they have a better understanding about what PR is, because people just don't.”*

On HEIs as a source of business innovation:

*“I think schools think that being involved in like tech incubators and having business people on boards, I think they all view those as very innovative. And we all are pulling from the same group. So for us, it's wonderful to see, the university that's doing the right thing and making sure that their students are kept abreast of the newest things that are coming out onto the market.”*

E3: This participant is the second banker in the pool and, as with his colleague, brought an ED as well as an employer perspective to the study. He has a history of hiring interns as well as employing students in projects for his bank.

On HEIs as a driver in labor force development:

*“It's a constant building exercise, but at the very startup level, it's about using the resources rather than figuring how they can use the resources back to the process. They're actually the end user of the jobs incubator entrepreneurial process that we're talking about here, they're the actual end user of that rather than the builder of it. When I'm talking to a C-level CEO somewhere, we're talking about how do we find the jobs, how do we get more people participating in and get that understood horizontally across the marketplace. Going vertical down to the smallest of entities, they're users of it. They're consumers of our product, they are not providers of resources.”*

On the role of workforce development in the HEIs image:

*“As an economic developer, yes. I think that it is one of the most critical components in addition, not besides, an additional workforce and infrastructure. You've got to have high-level educational experiences to build a workforce. It's a continuing circle. Without it, you're not going to be compelling to a site selector on why I want to move 150 in my mid to high-level executives that are being paid at significantly higher levels than the mean income levels of the county. You don't want to talk to him into moving.”*

E4: This participant has over 40 years of experience in the tourism and international hospitality industry and has worked for both large public venues and major hotel chains. His current role is executive director of a chamber of commerce in a small city in the Bay area. He routinely hires local interns and has a history of hiring students for local ED projects, as well as serving as a conduit to other hiring firms.

On the theme of HEI integration:

*“I think being part of the community is definitely number one. Being viewed as a real participant, as a stakeholder as an organization that really has some skin in the game and really has a contribution to make to the community. That seems to me, with the whole aspect of housing and the elements of bringing the university and the community together and how we do that. I think that is probably one of the major things.”*

The theme of presence in local ED:

*“Well, I think it's a resource that's probably number one thing. Here's an example, [redacted] wants to build his project in here. A major part of that was getting involved with St. Leo as a resource because there's a good IHT program there. As a resource for potential employees, the access to people who are very experienced in various fields, instructors, professors. The ability to be able to bring people together to do things like we do in [location redacted], CEO forms.”*

E5: As an employment attorney and former council at a private university, this participant brought a unique point of view to the study. In her current role as VP of HR for a local tourist destination, she has a history of hiring numerous interns as well as seasonal college employees.

On the brand impact for employers:

*“The universities, in general, have a pretty big impact because they are a critical pipeline for those of us in the hospitality industry, for people who just want to get their feet wet with part-time jobs, who are looking to support themselves locally, and their seasons often match what we're looking for. They also are a rich source for us, of people looking for their first job, that want to stay within the local market, and have graduated from a school that has a positive reputation in the community, and so lends credence to the quality of the degree that they would have gotten.”*

On the importance of the HEI's students' brand image:

*“I think one of the important things that colleges and universities do, or at least that they try to do and think some may do a better job than others, is instilling a sense of interest, engagement, and willingness to work in their students. I think [School 1] does a pretty good job of that. I have pretty consistently had good experiences with [School 3] students.”*

On the brand impact of HEIs in the community:

*“I think every time universities are doing things that support the community. When they do branded volunteer work and branded outreach, for which there is publicity. Let's plant a tree day. Let's do outreach at the homeless shelter, in a branded way. I think that those things help build broader goodwill within the community generally because of the visibility of outcome with brand.”*

### Alumni Participants

Alumni demonstrated the most variability in their responses. While they were aware that they had been asked to participate because they were [School 1] alumni, they come from a wide variety of industries (power generation, commercial video, banking) and vary considerably in age and education. Despite all of the participants having a business background or are in business, in some cases their knowledge of economic development, as defined in this study, was more limited than was that of the other two segments.

A1: As with other participants, this alumnus brought a dual perspective to the study. In addition to her role as a graduate of [School 1] (MBA) she has a history in

commercial banking and business development. Her current position is director of an incubator in San Antonio, Texas.

The role of HEI leadership on the function theme:

*“I think it's also important, too, with these relationships between the business community -- You mentioned boards previously, I think it's been a great opportunity for [School 1], as an example, to sit on the Pasco EDC board. I really do think that was great, because not only is the university able to get an ear for what's going on in the community, and I think that that's helpful to the university, to see what are the new business opportunities”.*

The role of the presence theme in ED recruitment:

*“It's unbelievable, it's unbelievable. Yes. I think that the business community has great respect for the university and the quality of education. I think that that is helpful when the local EDCs are recruiting companies to the area. They can say, "Look at the quality or the caliber of students that we have and that are graduating from our university." It's also really valuable, the type of technology that has spun out of the university, as well. Companies want to be around other like companies.”*

A2: This dual graduate of [School 1] (BA and MBA) is the director of corporate relations for a regional power generation firm. He is active in local politics and non-profits.

The importance of the presence theme in ED recruitment:

*“We try to recruit companies all the time for economic development. The Cooperative has developed two industrial parks: one Pasco Center, one Hernando Center. As we try to recruit jobs at our organization and recruit businesses, the first thing that businesses asked is what is -- They want to look at the quality of life but more importantly, they, too, want to look at the education capabilities.”*

The role of HEIs in innovation in ED:

*“Innovation is key to job growth. That's all there is to it. We live in a different technologically savvy world. People today are totally different from when I went through the program at [School 1], and it seems like things are changing at the speed of light. Universities bring that ability to make change. They bring that ability to be on the cutting edge of technology, they bring that ability to help.”*

The role of accessibility on the brand image of the HEI:

*“With [School 1], you can go and have a meeting with the Dean and say, "You know I've got an idea," and you can get -- Because it's locally controlled, you can get an answer right then, and they will help you work on a project. For example, [School 1] was extremely involved in Lacoochee when we worked to rebuild Lacoochee. I think it's what it-- It makes a world of difference. When we recruit from [School 1], we know we're recruiting someone that's local, that their family has generational history typically here, but more importantly, we know we have access to staff.”*

A3: In his role as the chair of the alumni board of directors, this participant was able to share a perspective that encompassed that of other alumni. His professional history is in banking, commercial lending and is currently a business broker in one of the faster growing areas on the Gulf Coast.

The role of HEIs on functionality in new business development:

*“Again, I think it goes back to success stories. We know that the university has one of the best reputations from educating teachers. Future teachers. We understand that the reputation is, if you are a graduate of [School 1] in Hillsborough or Pasco County, you are almost guaranteed a job. Based on the reputation of the school of education at the university. I don't think the criminology degree is getting people jobs in that industry. It's probably enhancing their opportunities to be promoted within the sheriff's department or...”*

The role of community involvement in promoting the HEI:

*“The importance to the brand of HEI involvement in the community: I think a lot of it has to do with the representative of the university and their involvement. Do they have the type of personality that people recognize? We have a young lady, it's not a young lady, she's probably in her late 40s. Her name is [redacted]. She works for [School 4], which has a local presence here. [Redacted] has been recognized as one of the most active members of the Lakewood business alliance in bringing in new members.”*

A4: As the only true Millennial in the interview pool, this participant was able to lend the perspective of an alumnus with recent undergraduate experience. He is currently a partner in a commercial video production firm with a national presence. His firm frequently hires local interns and was recently recognized for their role in revitalizing the underserved community in which their offices are located. He is also on the alumni board and is a former NCAA athlete.

On HEI role in urban redevelopment:

*“It started with Tampa EDC, so we've aligned ourselves with Tampa EDC. We were approached by the IP team, which is what did I just call it? innovation place. They're a committee, and what they did was they are really well-connected with all-- Busch Gardens is involved in this too. They all aligned themselves in this small little area where they have Moffit is right here, [School 2] is right here, Busch Gardens, University Mall, and then they brought us in too. From there, we've been looking at ways to basically change completely the perception of this area, and to bring in more tech-savvy people. Similar to what you would see out in California, and I guess things like that where it's forward thinkers.”*

The influence of HEI values on the brand:

*“Well, they have a huge impact, I think, whether it's outreach or even on the students that attend those universities. When you talk about your brand or what your values and beliefs are, you etch that into the students that attend there. They're going to give back, and that's going to portray that entire city. Obviously, at [School 1] it's the core values, right? When I left [School 1], I still knew all the core values, and I knew them by heart. I thought to myself-- I don't even know how I knew all of them, but it was written, it was talked about in every class, it was etched in our brain. That's why I think those kinds of initiatives are things that can lead to pretty good stuff as far as the universities make a change.”*

On the value of brand perception and promotion:



*“A lot of it I think is perception [chuckles]. Yes, I think it’s having their voice out there heard. If the community perceives that a university is aligning themselves and then taken in these types of initiative, I think people will see that. Once they see it, it’s subconsciously in the brain, and now it’s about actually doing it. You could do a lot of stuff to align yourself, but if nobody knows about it -- I mean, you’re still doing a good thing but the widespread of the population won’t know about it.”*

A5: This alumnus is the former PIO for a major metropolitan police force and serves on [School 1]’s President’s Council. His current position is Regional Communications Director for a telecommunications and cable provider.

The role of the integration theme to new business development:

*“How do we drive the business here? If you have university faculty that are in tune with the community, Chamber of Commerce community, when they understand what their needs are, they can also tailor, if you will, their classes or their offerings to maybe, the hospitality industry. That has a benefit for everybody. It helps the university but helps drives the business and economic development. You know the old saying, “When the tide rises, everybody’s boat’s rising.” It works for everybody.”*

The role of differentiation on the HEIs brand (promotion):

*“It’s so competitive out there. Which universities to send my son and daughter to? For a lot of parents. Really, universities all teach, for the most part, the same syllabus, unless with some specializations but whether it’s marketing, whether it’s business, whether it’s sociology. You want to be able to go, “How do I set myself apart from all the other players in the market?”*

*“That’s the key and that brand drive or that brand recognition can make or break you in being the reason mom and dad or an independent or even take a working adult says, “I want to go to this university because this is the university I think that will best fit my needs and will be most accommodating to me in my work schedule.” Branding is critical to that. Everyone’s got a university, everyone’s got a reason to like them, you want to be that reason to make it shine a little brighter.”*

### Summary of the Revealed Themes

While, as Soldana (2013) notes, authors differ in small ways regarding a definition of a “theme” in qualitative research, there is a general consensus that a theme is an idea or concept that can be expressed in a phrase or sentence and is the outcome of codes found in the data. Soldana (2013) draws on the work of DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000) and their literature review of thematic analysis in stating that other terms used to describe a theme include “category”, “domain” and “unit of analysis”. These authors, in distilling these terms, ultimately define the concept of theme(s) as “an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent [patterned] experience and its manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole” (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 200 p. 362; Soldana, 2013 pp. 175-176). Soldana further clarifies this idea in noting that themes may emerge from any number of sources, including interviews, as is the case in this research (p. 3).

Bernard et al., (2017), in drawing on several previous works but most notably that of Agar (1979) suggests that a theme can be defined as “fundamental concepts we are trying to define” (p. 103). These authors also make an important distinction between induced themes, which derive directly from the data and a priori themes (aka deduced) which result from the researcher’s personal experience and first-hand knowledge of the subject matter (Bernard et al., 2017 p. 104). The authors further describe this concept as also being derived from “local, commonsense constructs ....and personal experiences” (p. 104). This is very much the case in the research as this researcher has extensive experience with the local ED environment and HEI involvement with the same.

The concept of a priori themes is important in this research as the researcher has both practical and academic experience in the subject matter under study and therefore had some expectations regarding what broad concepts might emerge from the interviews. Bernard et al., (2017) confirm that interviews, accompanied by the researcher's experience and the extant literature are useful sources of a priori themes. In the case of this research, this experience and prior knowledge formed the basis for the interview questions and the selection of the participants based on the skill sets and professions required to answer the research questions. As with other authors, Bernard et al., (2017) support the practice of open or initial coding to reveal the a priori themes with data found in the interviews (pp. 104-105).

This section provides a brief summary of the four dominant themes that emerged from an analysis of the data. These were arrived at by a synthesis of three practices:

First, the a priori knowledge of the researcher as supported by the practice described by Bernard et al., (2017). The themes, while not precisely as described herein, are highly consistent with those observed in many meetings, projects, and university functions over a six-year period. All four themes, to greater or lesser degrees, are also supported in the literature as noted below.

Second, notes taken during the interviews. These are not detailed or extensive, as this researcher believes that, contrary to some qualitative work in the literature, extensive note taking is disruptive to the process. Rather, a simple code was employed to highlight some expected concepts which, in many cases, emerged as the themes discussed below.

Third, the initial or open coding of the data as suggested by any number of authors such as Soldana (2013), Bernard et al., (2017); Miles and Huberman (1994) and Charmaz (2014).

Consequently, the findings discussed below and in Chapter V are the result of a synthesis of deduced a priori themes and induced themes drawn directly from the interview data.

#### Theme One: Function

*E6: "In order to be successful, you have to have face to face; you've got to be out there in the business community talking to the elite business leaders. Like I said, it doesn't have to be the president when you're dealing with companies of my size, certainly don't expect that and wouldn't encourage it, and we don't have time for it. Yes, everybody's got to get off their butt and get out of their seat, and go talk."*

*ED4: "I would say that it has a very positive impact to start with and I think universities, in general, tend to be very rich with resources for a community of any size. I don't care if you're talking about a very small town or a bigger one. I think having access to whether it's the business school or the marketing school or probably even the social work, anything".*

This was undoubtedly the most prevalent theme and was expressed, in one form or another, by all the participants. This theme captures the practical, applied or "hands-on" things that HEIs do to support local ED and business development. While less "warm and fuzzy" than the theme of "Presence" discussed below, the participants believed these activities were vital to the impact of the university on ED and local development., Further, there was a general consensus that the functional activities likely had not only the most direct impact on the visibility of the institution within the business community but also on the perceived image of the school.

*E3: “But the university is the feeder market to the whole thing and with the resources and the expertise like people like [redacted (a member the [School 1] faculty)], then that's what the entrepreneurs or the people with the ideas are coming into here and want to learn and want to grow their business, it's an environment which allows that to happen.”*

*ED2: “[School 1] gets very, very high marks from the business sectors, particularly those who have links to the services being offered, the curriculum, whatever it may be, advising, consulting, whatever. There's really high marks there for that. Our school district is a huge beneficiary of the education program.”*

*E3: “Do more than just sit in a meeting. Occupying a chair in a meeting because it's a pay to play environment with the Pasco EDC, unlike other places I've been where it's not pay to play. Pay to play has advantages and disadvantages. One of disadvantages is you don't necessarily get your best talents sitting in those seats. You get whoever paid the most to sit in the seat. If you're going to occupy a seat, you need to participate, in my opinion.”*

Thus, this theme, as the name suggests, are those functional and applied things that universities do that, in the perception of all three segments, have a tangible and “real-world” impact on the community generally, and business/ED specifically. This is not particularly surprising. As noted above, a priori common sense, the experience of any business professional as well as the literature would support this theme. For example, Sullivan (2011) discusses the importance of schools of business taking a leadership role in developing a workforce and nurturing innovation. The crucial role of incubators has been discussed extensively both in this investigation and in the extant literature (McAdam & Marlow, 2008; Ahmad & Ingle, 2011). Incubators are an ideal example of the Function theme – applied, practical and actionable. Note that in the case of following quotes the reader should be aware that [School 1] is a contributor, both in funding and personnel, to the incubator in question.

*ED1: "...we're so concerned these days about entrepreneurship and a trained workforce. That both the community colleges and the colleges and universities play a pretty big role in supplying the workforce that we have. Also, recruiting people to the extent they do from outside the county who represent a source of new talent. Whether that be people who might stay on and own businesses, or people who would work in high performing businesses. That's pretty key."*

*ED6: "Incubators have a long history and sometimes they're effective. I know I've seen the research that shows that they're really effective, but on the other hand, incubators are a mixed bag. Examples are -- it's hard to keep getting those people in and keeping them flowing and the numbers of people wanting to do them seem to ebb and flow. I've seen some start up and close. The one we have here in Dade City, the activities that go on because we have incubator are very good for Dade City."*

Similar concepts can be found in the branding literature concerning higher education. Stephenson and Yerger (2013) discuss the importance of student engagement and affairs in the attitude of alumni and Bowen (2013) notes that while the growing prevalence of “amenities” on campus has branding value, the better question may be which schools will get their graduates a job. These concepts were born out in the interviews – all three segments cited student projects, and especially interning, as valued parts of the institution’s image and brand.

*E1: "Well, obviously, the Incubator is one good way that [School 1] is participating in that. Probably, students with projects could do that kind of thing because they're studying it, they're studying under professionals at universities, and they're doing case studies. They probably have more of an ongoing idea than the guy that's starting his new business that maybe doesn't have a college degree and has never looked at this stuff. I just see those possibilities."*

*ED6: “Well, first, there are a number of times we sit around the table and brainstorm to come up with some kind of a question and you say, “Well, gosh. I don't understand that.” I wonder if anybody understands that and then usually, in Dade City anyway, it won't be long before [School 1] is brought up because I'll say, “Well you know, particularly this [School 1 faculty member] guy, he has these students that they're always trying to learn things. He's trying to find something relative for them to learn and it may be that he can hook that learning experience to solving your problem.”*

Examples of activities that support the Function theme would include:

- Incubators
- Internship programs
- Student projects in the business community
- Serving on boards and in business organizations (chambers of commerce, economic development councils)

*E1: “Well I think, as they get their businesses up and running and they're communicating with customers and other people in the local business community, I'm sure they're going to be able to relate what they did to get started and who helped them with their business plans. For us, it's a benefit too because they're going to somebody that can really help them structure a business plan. It makes us a lot more comfortable lending money to them as a startup because, usually, you're wary of startups because the small business failures are a high percentage.”*

*ED4: [referring to a successful student ED project] “and you know this from your study that (the university) helped the chamber with. When we sent these young Millennials downtown, so there is -- trust me, I've been dealing with this for a long -- myself. How do you get them to open their arms and welcome -- I use the word relationship building...”*

*E3: “Because the students are giving back, and they-- It helps the business community have an image on the university saying these kids care about the community, about businesses, and maybe there's a way that we don't export that away. We're able to keep them here.” [referring to student projects in local businesses]*

*ED4: "But they learn that as they go through the universities. You provide, I think that validity or an accountability. That validity would be the word and providing those statistics, those numbers, those outcomes that so often in so many conversations that I have when I'm trying to put together whether it's creating jobs, creating a plan, or project, the first thing everybody was, "Show me the numbers." Or, "Let me see what it is." And, "What's it going to cost?"" [referring to the skills that faculty and students bring to community projects]*

## Theme Two: Integration

*ED2: "That's probably the easiest question we've tried to deal with, because what you're seeing today, whether it's universities, whether it is state colleges, community colleges, those institutions no longer feel as though they have to offer their services behind the ivory walls. They take it to the business, to the ground, to the point of service, to offer the services, and that-- Gosh, there's enough. I can name probably a dozen examples between Polk, Pasco, Pinellas, and Hillsborough where colleges are taking -- when I say colleges, that's broad -- are taking their offerings direct to the employer and entering into partnerships to do that."*

*ED1: "Having a university is a great addition. That creates a marketing ability, it creates an addition to the product offering that you have to offer as a community marketer. Why is that, well because you have research sources, you've got a source of talent, you've got a better quality of life because of what the universities typically offer in terms of bringing in arts and music and lectures and writers and all that sort of thing. Definitely, for somebody thinking about relocating a business or even growing a business if they're already there, it adds a lot."*

This theme was, as in the case of Function, not surprising and again is an example of an a priori theme. Most, if not all, working professionals in the field would reasonably expect this theme emerge from the data, albeit not necessarily with this name. Therefore, it is not surprising that many of the participants, in one form or another, expressed some version of this theme. However, it was most prevalent among the ED professionals and to a lesser degree, among the alumni. Alumnus A2's comment is typical of the idea that HEIs need to become embedded or integrated into their community in order to build an image.



*A2: “Joe and Jane Taxpayer, they're so -- Many of them till they get a little older or whatever caught up in their own daily lives, so I don't know to what extent they view [School 1] at. From my interactions with these folks, many of their kids have gone to [School 1], I think they view it as an incubator to success for the county because just think of what the county would be if you didn't have [School 1]. If you didn't have all these people graduate -- There was a study done that most people when they graduate from college stay within 50 or 75 miles of where they graduated from college at. Look at the business impact [School 1] has.”*

This theme is typified in those things that HEIs in general, and the sample school specifically, do that “integrates” them into the community at large and the ED or business environment specifically. This theme is a good example of the notion suggested by Soldana (2013), among others such as Creswell (2013), that themes are often not discrete units that stand entirely unto themselves. Rather, the themes and the underlying codes overlap and intertwine. This is the case with the Integration theme as it has similar characteristics as those that define Function. While this creates challenges in coding the data, it also creates a far richer mosaic for the researcher.

The following data quotes typify this overlap of themes.

In these quotes, the themes of Integration and Function overlap. The students performing the work noted by the participants were clearly helping Integrate the university into the community while at the same time they were performing a tangible function. Adding yet another dimension to the theme, due to the high profile of the project (a survey of a downtown business district) the university received considerable Promotion, including local press coverage and the faculty leader being nominated as “citizen of the year”. Promotion is discussed below as the fourth theme revealed in the coding.

*ED5: “Your ...[name redacted] consultant group that you're doing with the students. But, to see the students be able to be active and providing a product that will help them in their future. But, also help those local businesses that may not otherwise get the help, because they can't afford it. To have that word of mouth spread, "Oh, did you know [School 1] did this? And, here's how they helped.””*

*ED1” Just not talking about it, just in terms of the image that it presents or the way that it kind of gets you things you can market from the standpoint of talking to businesses, but what it can do for you as an economic developer or an economic development organization then I think you get into a host of other things. As an example, you can get people from the university to sit on your board, the university could help fund you on an ongoing basis, especially if you're a non-profit.”*

As noted, this theme should come as no particular surprise as both practice, and the literature, suggest that it would emerge from the data. An example of the former is [School 1] students developing, on a pro-bono basis, a social media and internship model for a non-profit focused on domestic abuse and rape crisis intervention. The positive experience for the students notwithstanding, a casual observer might disregard the economic development or business related implications of the project. However, the executive director of the NPO is also deeply embedded in the business community, as are many of her supporters and donors. As a result of a seemingly minor project, the students themselves, and the university generally, became further “integrated” into the community at large and the ED community specifically. This is typical of the Integration theme – students, faculty, and the administration engage in activities that only superficially seem related to ED, but result in “integration” with business and ED leaders.

*ED2: "When you see students leaving campus to go and do some volunteer things. For example, when the privacy fence was put up around the domestic violence shelter. We had a slew of super enthusiastic college kids from here, showed up to pull nails out of boards and figure out how to get things done. They didn't know one end of a hammer from the other but they had the enthusiasm and the caring to want to see it through. It's 90-degrees, and they showed up early and stuck with it though the rest of us left."*

Turning to the literature, Trapp et al., (2010) discuss the value of the student experience as part of what they term as the brand ecosystem, and that part of this ecosystem is community. Lynch and Owen (2011) support the concept of the value of community engagement, concluding that such community interaction leads to superior pedagogy, student experience, and employability. The unique contribution of this theme to that stream of thought is the integration between community engagement, the business community and brand equity.

*A5: And really, I think as I focused on throughout this interview, it has got to be -- you got to establish those relationships and those working partnerships with the different industry leaders throughout the region. Not focusing on what's just outside the gate of your university but who in the region are an industry leader whether is it Raytheon, is it Spectrum, is it Verizon, is it any one of the hospitality industry things that are really driving and leading the industry and focusing on what they need to drive their products and services and the qualities that they're looking for, taking that back and betting it into your curriculum and giving your opportunity to your students get that real world real-time education to make them successful when they come out, and they hit the deck running and become an asset to whatever team they join.*

Enriching this theme are two factors:

First, Integration is far less tangible than Function. In the latter theme, we can point to something the HEI does and clearly identify it as a physical manifestation of ED or business activities. Again, an incubator is an example. In the case of Integration, this research had to draw on subtler codes in the data to support the theme. Faculty and

student involvement in the community are examples of this – those Functions may not obviously be Integration, but codes from the interviews suggest that integration is an important part of contributing to the HEI’s perceived brand equity on the part of the business community. Make note of the reference to “values” in the second (ED4) and third (ED3) quotes. This type of comment occurred several times in the interviews – the idea of community values, however intangible, served to bolster the theme of Integration.

*ED2: “There's going to be wide, wide differences there. There are universities out there that still view themselves in a very cloistered realm. You'll find there's a growing trend toward being the university that you just described. Taking the university to the community and offering programs that fit what have been identified as the needs. There's a very, very strong tradition: we are what we are and we're going to continue to be that even if it's obsolete. the monastery type university.”*

*ED4: “They (universities) all obviously will have a little different mission in what we're trying to accomplish, but I think we're all operating where, look, we're trying to do the right thing, we're trying to help, we're trying to create good sound individuals to keep moving forward. I think that's how I see institutions and things that I work with is I'm going to seek those out that I know who else are going to be beneficial to me and share similar values. I'm not going to go to you if I think you're a horrible -- if I don't believe in what you stand for or how you carry yourselves or operate, I don't see why anybody would really want to, and that's true.”*

Second, it appears that a case can be made for two sub-themes within Integration.

The first of these is Operational Integration. These are the more overt, tangible forms of integration and might be thought of as the HEI getting outside, or beyond, the gates of the institution. This is very much part and parcel of the notion that HEI’s are less rooted in the “ivory tower” mentality than is commonly assumed. The two quotes below are both representative of the sub-theme of Operational Integration. In both cases, the participants

are identifying some attribute of the university that is overt and integrates the institution into the community.

*ED1: "...let me also say one more thing about universities that just occurred to me. I've been talking in the context of somebody doing community marketing, but universities also play a huge role, at least some of them in the development or the re-development of the community. Not necessarily the real estate side so much but in figuring out how to rebuild neighborhoods and bringing resources to revitalizing the communities and that sort of thing."*

*ED6: "The question is, "How can the universities help you with that retention [of talent] issue?" and of course many of the answers are, "Well, they can do things right in your business place. They can help you in the front end and get people trained to know you so that when they're ready to go and be their stand-alone professional, they already want to work for you." There are a lot of things like that."*

As noted above, codes, and the resulting themes are often not standalone or mutually exclusive to other themes or sub-themes (Soldana, 2013). An example of this is student internships, a topic that frequently reoccurred in the data coding. While clearly a Function (and an important part of the theme), and one that both practical experience and the literature supports as being important (Clark & White, 2010) internships that place students in experiential learning settings in the business community is supported by the data as being also applicable to Operational Integration.

*E4: "Then again, offering the opportunities for those students to work. I love your idea of the entrepreneurial centre aspect, because it would give them maybe something that they could really latch on to and be able to see that there is reason for us to stay, there is reason for us to develop our ideas and become ingrained in the community and part of the community and start a life where we are."*

*ED6: "Well, first of all, I would want to talk about the opportunities for youngsters that grow up in their town because I find that most people are interested in retaining the nice kids. They are all worried about they get seduced by the UFs or the giant football teams, etcetera, which they do. At the same time, if there's a local option that has a good reputation, it's an opportunity for those kids to just continue on in talent. That's usually important to most business folks."*

The second of these sub-themes is Institutional Integration. As with other themes, this can be viewed from both the practitioner and academic literature perspectives. With regard to the former, several of the participants noted that HEI's in general, and in some cases [School 1] specifically, are their "go to" source(s) for support and expertise for their firms or NPOs. The quotes (codes) suggest that this perspective on the part of the participants goes beyond viewing the institution(s) as merely a resource but as a valued partner, as typified in these quotes:

*A3: I think it shows us that they're (referring to universities) keenly interested in the economic success of the area. It gives them the opportunity to hear what are the needs. We developed a program called Lakewood Ranch Ambassador Program. We started out calling on the largest members. Those are members with 25 plus or more employees. We would call on and say, "What's your hot button? What's bothering you now? Have you given any thoughts to expanding? You're not thinking about relocating?" Just gathering information. I will tell you that the major underlying thing that comes back is finding good quality, trained employees.*

*A5: Even as a young officer, I'm not making much money. Simply ... goes back to relationships but obviously someone in the department worked with someone at [School 1] at the time and said the old police station on campus, we'll make weekend classes available in the cafeteria if you guys are ok with us coming in and you give us a minimum number of students, we'll work with them and that had such a tremendous positive impact on a lot of us day in day out pushing patrol cars. (A5 was formerly a police officer and PIO)*

The literature also supports this idea that HEIs can be institutionally integrated into the business community. Elmuti et al. (2005) argue in their examination of university/corporate alliances that both parties benefit from the alliances and that the two may become deeply intertwined. Specific to this research, the authors also note that academia is more supportive of the alliances if the faculty believe the outcomes support local economic development, which is the focal point of this investigation. Thus, as HEIs

engage in activities that support the local business and ED environment, the Institutional Integration becomes deeper and more a part of the institution's brand. The follows quotes are examples of the sub-theme of Institutional Integration:

*A4: "I'm going off subject there, but to bring it back in, I know they have a lot of opportunity in the community and I think we've seen, just because we're right next to [School 2], what they've impacted the community. We're actually aligned with them to build out this district here because this is usually known as suitcase city. We have aligned ourselves with Moffitt, Florida Hospital, [School 2], and University Mall. University Mall is going to get completely renovated, and all those three centers are going to have facilities inside that mall."*

*A4: "We've gone to them whether it's through our internships, but largely through our base of community builders. I think that position, universities have a place where they can-- They're at a bit of a higher stage and their decisions end up trickling down. If the university aligns their initiatives and vision with the city, you could see a lot of really positive things happening."*

*A2: "They want good schools, and they want good colleges and universities around, and [School 1]'s known for that. We tell it, it's a big issue. It's one of the things we put in our marketing material when we go to recruit a business. It's a big deal. They often ask the classes and what type of classes that they offer. Because not only with [School 1], especially if it's in the manufacturing realm, they'll need a certain set of manufacturing skills, can you provide that?"*

*E1: "I think it's [School 1] one of the still not fully-appreciated gems that we have here, but I think that's changing. To me, those are the things that the University can do. Provide opportunity, educational, and even economic opportunity, for those of us that live here, bring other people into the area and bring new ideas and new things to our area which has got to be a positive."*

### Theme Three: Presence

*A5: No one is an island. In a business community, to be successful, you have to become part of the fabric of that community, understand what this community wants, what this community needs. Also to drive your product, you're going to have to meet the needs of what your consumers want. Same thing with the university. The university is not an island. To be successful, to draw the students that you need, you're going to have to be part of-- Interwoven into that community whether the business community, the economic community, the government, all aspects of it.*

This theme is particularly intriguing to those of us in the academic community because, as noted elsewhere in this study, we are so often accused of living within ourselves and our ivory tower. The Presence theme, which occurred with some regularity in the interviews, helps to dispel this notion. At the same time, it both less intuitive and a priori than Function and Integration.

Presence suggests that simply by “being there” the HEI performs a valuable function and that there is some influence on brand equity by the mere presence in the community. Do our “academic homes” contribute to the welfare of our ED and business communities just by being a part of the landscape, absent of any specific activity or overt action? The results of the coding suggest this may be the case, albeit on a limited basis. The following three quotes are typical of those supporting the Presence theme. In the first, there are undertones of both Function and Integration, but the code lacks the specificity desired in both of these themes. Rather, ED6 is referring to value of the school’s reputation and “presence” – can I “just take a drive over...?”

*A1: I think that, again, from an economic development organization standpoint, when we are talking with the business communities that are looking, for instance, to relocate or expand their operations, they want to know who the universities are, the local universities, and how involved they are with the business community, because they want to understand how easy or difficult it's going to be for them to start working with that university, in order to get talent. [Note that A1 participated as an Alumnus but is also an experienced ED expert.]*

*A3: I think the impact of universities in a community, especially from an economic development perspective, is education drives everything. If you are going to attract companies or industries into an area, one of the first things they're going to ask about is the educational system, be it from kindergarten to 12th grade or post-high school. The more availability, the more recognized, the reputation of that university as far as the degrees that are available and successful graduates of those universities has a big impact on economic development.*



Presence in the context of an HEI might be analogous to a firm enjoying a positive brand image in their community not necessarily because of taxes or jobs, but simply because the firm is centric to the community and therefore viewed positively. An example is a bit of local business history that is commonly discussed in Dade City, the community often the focus of this investigation due to its proximity to [School 1] and [School 2].

In Dade City, the government center of Pasco County and the closest town to [School 1], there was for many years a major citrus processing plant. The plant was the largest employer in the community and supported a number of smaller businesses due to “spillover” effect. While the plant’s jobs were missed by the community when it was closed, an equally common lament was to the effect that “we missed the whistle telling us when it was time for lunch and when the men were headed home.” The plant enjoyed a positive image in the community due in large part to its mere presence. Although new firms have occupied the factory’s buildings and land and replaced many of the jobs, the whistle is still missed by many of the town’s “old timers” and the new firms are viewed with far less affection and positive brand equity.

*ED3: [discussing the impact that the university has simply by being in the community – the multiplier effect on the economy] “Multiplier, you’ve got a certain amount of energy. We recognize as economic developers that we don’t create jobs, the companies create jobs. Even though our economic developers all claim, we created X number of jobs this year and X number of capital investment. We facilitated the creation of that. There are certain people that work with us that help to facilitate those types of activities and all have different pieces of the pie. Workforce development agencies are a big part of that. University system also falls into both the workforce development but also the innovation side of that...”*

*ED1: Also, cultural things too. As an example, if you're working with foreign companies and you may have people who are foreign culture experts, you can bring them in to mix and match some things. Help to both educate yourself but also deal with people who maybe speak a foreign language or have strange, from our perspective, cultural baggage that they bring with them. I think that's one thing.*

While those in both the academic community itself and those stakeholders in the business and ED communities might intuitively believe that there is a value just in HEIs being in the geographic area, this notion is less clearly articulated both anecdotally and in the literature than in the two preceding themes.

Anecdotally, a story that does not appear in the coded transcripts but has been cited a number of times in meetings involving the local business community around [School 1] at which this researcher has been present, is that of a mid-size manufacturing firm considering the relocation of one of its business units to Pasco County, where [School 1] and Dade City are located. The wife of the firm's owner was quite adamant that wherever they decide to site the new plant must be near a university. The simple presence of the institution helped reassure this "covert" decision maker, filling an important contributory role to local economic development, that she and her children would have a superior quality of life. The following quotes from the participants in the ED segment ED1 typify this idea:

*ED1: Well, typically the major employers -- they're gonna sort of already know that. Probably the thing with them is I wouldn't necessarily make the assumption that they know it but you have to be willing to, or you have to understand that you may need to like make a pretty quick switch because if you start saying, "Let us tell you about XYZ university in our community here," and they go, "Well, we already know about them, right?" It's like, "Okay. Well." Then what you have to do is -- well you may know in general, but there are a couple people there specifically that we think you ought to be aware of.*

*ED5: It helps out to open up that door and economic development is also a courtship. One way or another, you do have to build trust with your end-user, with your client. Same as you would as a doctor or anybody else. If you don't have that trust, no relationship can start. Our local college is being able to have a way out, not have a way in for the other companies to come into them. I think that (the university's presence) is beneficial.*

*ED4: "I'm excited because hopefully it does-- Gives people the reason to go, "Hey, wow, I know Dade City. It's on the map." Their experience that makes them. If they're thinking about setting up a job or a business with 10 people that, "You know what, they're doing these great things. Not just the Kumquat Festival but having these other things." (referencing the impact having the university nearby has on a small community)*

While the coding does indeed lend support to this theme and the idea that HEIs in, and of, themselves are a valuable community resource regardless of overt activities, it is also clear from the coding that some universities are more adept at developing this Presence and that their success in doing so is linked to the idea of “getting outside the walls”. In this case, this quote less about concrete, explicit activity than it is about attitude and culture:

Note: the mayor is responding to a question about the university's presence in the community. The “turn left” reference is regarding a student project to get students to shop and eat in the local community rather than travel to Tampa. The mayor has four 20-something children.

*ED4: I think it's that and actually, we're working on that other part. I think it's connecting the university with the particular job or community to assist each -- I think again, it's to assist each other because I think they're -- I think it's you all better work together so we can all understand it and educate -- no is educating. That's really not educating. We're going to go back to the turn left thing where we're trying to -- you got to have an experience. My kids would tell me, my 20-somethings, "It's all about the experience, mom."*

*ED3: There would be additional advantages. That is that, it is somewhat similar to what I described, but it is that culture of learning that's embraced. Because we talked specifically about the interplay between business and academia. We didn't talk about the fact that the majority of the faculty are going to live in that area, and are going to have children and want the best for them.*

While the academic literature is replete with studies regarding the direct economic impact of HEIs on jobs, taxes and spinoff businesses, there is far less on the concept of the impact on communities of the university simply by its presence. O'Connor, Lynch, and Owens (2011) stress the importance of HEIs being a full and active member their community, with emphasis on collaboration and integration into the community. Cook, Campbell, and Kopp (2013) approach the concept in their study of Small Business Institute engagement with HEIs when they write

*“Engagement should be a deeper relationship among universities, students, and communities that benefits all stakeholders and requires a meaningful commitment from all parties” (p. 2).*

However, this perspective is still more one of what the university does overtly, rather than the less tangible concept implied in the Presence theme. The codes below offer some additional insight into the Presence theme:

*A1: “It's unbelievable, it's unbelievable. Yes. I think that the business community has great respect for the university and the quality of education. I think that that is helpful when the local EDCs are recruiting companies to the area. They can say, “Look at the quality or the caliber of students that we have and that are graduating from our university.” It's also really valuable, the type of technology that has spun out of the university, as well. Companies want to be around other like companies.”*

*E4: The first thing that comes to mind is access. Access to a workforce, access to new ideas, access to an entrepreneurial spirit, access to experienced professors or things like what [redacted] does with [ name redacted – E4 is referring to a student managed consulting firm]. There's so many elements outside of just the financial side of it that the university could bring to an entrepreneur. Just being able to go over and be on the campus and take advantage of things like the smart start challenge and the number of programs that are offered through there in conjunction with the businesses.*

*A4: From there, we've been looking at ways to basically change completely the perception of this area, and to bring in more tech-savvy people. Similar to what you would see out in California, and I guess things like that where it's forward thinkers.*

*E2: I think that -- We're in our 10th year, so we're not a startup anymore, but having -- The other girls in the office aren't as intrigued by the Ivory Tower, so to speak, as I am, but I've always had a soft spot for education. So for me, it's a perfect fit on the people that I want to meet and the things that they're teaching their students, and what I can expect students or recent graduates do, and the talents and skills that they're going to come out with.*

#### Theme Four: Promotion

*A5: “Brand recognition is huge. The established company is already going to have a place in the consumers’ minds and hearts about whether or not their product, their services, or what they want, what they trust, what they rely on, what they depend on. You’re a start-up company, who are you? It’s the question you used to see on bumper stickers, “Who’s John Galt?””*

The application of the marketing mix is a necessary component of brand equity.

As noted in the literature review in Chapter 2, the most commonly accepted view of brand equity is that it is the differential enjoyed by one product (brand) over a competing brand due to some application of the marketing mix (Davicik et al., 2015; Keller, 1993, 2003; Shafi & Madhavaiah, 2014). Within the mix, the “P” considered to commonly have the greatest influence on equity is promotion (Baxendale et al., 2015; Keller, 1993, Zhang et al., 2014;). While traditional mediums (print, broadcast and direct mail, for example) still serve as the primary vehicles for promoting a firm’s brand, increasingly non-standard

forms of promotion are playing an important role (Arons et al., 2014; Pinar et al., 2014). This trend can be seen both in practice and in the extant body of marketing communication and branding literature.

In the case of the former, there are any number of examples with which most consumers are familiar. Red Bull has built a reputation and brand image on their support of extreme sports and somewhat outrageous events; Dawn dishwashing soap has made no small matter of its effectiveness at cleaning oil-soaked wildlife, and emerging firms such as Lush are busily carving out a brand position based on social awareness and eco-friendly products. On a somewhat lighter note, Uber and Humane Society locations across the U.S., E.U. and Canada enhanced both brands with their well-publicized kitten and puppy deliveries for “cuddle time”, a promotion that not only raised funds for the agencies but differentiated Uber from its competitors (and resulted in an 80% adoption rate). Much as in the case with these examples in which the firm used high visibility, non-standard forms of promotion to convey their brand message, participants in the study were largely consistent in their perception that HEI involvement in business and community development resulted in increased awareness of the HEI brand. These responses by A4 (a promotional videographer) and ED1 (a forty-year veteran of economic development) are typical of that perception:

*A4: “I’ll bring it back to-- We work with Enterprise Florida. What they do is, their main goal is to go out and bring large businesses or satellite locations to Florida, continue to bring business to Florida. I see that as a large scale, and then a small scale would be the EDCs, where they’re trying to bring in the opportunities. I think whenever university can align themselves with EDCs and be on the same initiative, not only that, but you’re getting free advertisement.”*

*ED1: "I think it's pretty important cause here campuses look really great and a lot of people just drive by, and they don't really know what's there. So the opportunity for that campus visits. So maybe, yes, it's not business-related, but maybe the local symphony is housed at the university as an example. Certain activities give the university a certain cache."*

Specific to this study, one senior university official (although not a participant as he did not fit any of the three segments under investigation he was informally interviewed for background and anonymity was promised) noted that while he welcomed the service aspect of faculty working with local ED and small business, he was also motivated by the impact the activities had on the university's brand and potential for donors. In the view of this administrator, a former marketing practitioner with senior management experience, the ED and consulting activities that he had assigned to this researcher and others in the business school were not only in keeping with our commitment to the community, but they were also equally a cost-effective method to promote the university.

*ED1: [in response to a question about what makes one HEI more effective than another at promoting their image]: "Well, I think it's like they play offense. They go out and try to make things happen as opposed to waiting for somebody to come to you. That's probably how it used to be. People were -- They were doing their research in the university. They were getting paid through a grant or whatever. If somebody came to them and had a research job, they would -- Not necessary a research job just a consulting job, they would evaluate it, price it, maybe take it on. Whereas now I do get the impression that the universities that are really good at this, they are going out trying to make this happen."*

*E2: "Well I think that if you do something really great, then people want to brag about it, they're proud, even though they may not have anything to do with it, I think that as a whole they are still proud. That could go with anything. I think as a student when you find out that "Well, they're meeting with the business community and now they're involved in this organization, and they're funneling students to this organization," I think that as a whole you're like," "Wow, that's great, I'm so proud of them. Did you hear what my school is doing now? This is really wonderful, I wish they would have that when I was there, this is really great."*

The importance of the marketing mix generally, and promotion specifically, is supported in the academic literature (Brunello, 2013). The literature also notes that the promotion may not be traditional and could take the form of activities that connect the customer more closely to the brand (Steimer, 2017). Arons, van de Briel and Weed (2014), describe this as the shift from a focus on share of wallet to a “share of experience” (p. 58). Starbucks is an ideal example of this perspective in brand management – the firm is focused on ensuring that regardless of where their customers encounter a cup of Starbucks coffee, they not only have a positive experience but that the experience is consistent from location to location – even if they are a continent apart. Relative to this research, students engaged in internships or faculty assisting with local development or consulting serve a similar purpose to that Starbucks barista that knows every customer’s name – the function is to create a closeness and experience. This was a consistent aspect across all three segments, but especially employers and alumni – the students were seen as brand ambassadors, and the manifestation of that was internships and student projects.

*A1: “That’s one thing. Also, the business has an opportunity to tout the university, as a whole, that provided the interns. “Wow, what a great person I had from this university.” I think there’s another opportunity there, as well, because I know that that happens quite a bit, just from personal experience.”*

*A4: “Yes, that’s what I’m thinking. I mean when you hear a story of a student who graduates and moves on, and does something, whether it’s related in their field of expertise. I’m sure [School 1] has stories of people who’ve achieved great things and you promote that as just this story of so and so, and what they’ve done with their education. You tell that story, compared to telling them that we’ve graduated X amount of people this past year, and this and that. Those are sometimes just stats. Stories are now the game changer, and people are growing towards that.”*



The Promotion theme emerged with some regularity in the interviews. As few of the participants had extensive marketing experience, they may not have used the terminology as would a marketing professional, however, the concept was clear. In their perceptions, the activities that universities engaged in to support local ED and business growth, raised the visibility of the institution and enhanced its image. The quotes below are representative of that theme.

*A5: "I can tell you the other side. There is a couple of universities in this market. I don't remember any of them coming to our company and asking, "Hey, can we set up a shop here? Can we set up evening or weekend classes? We'll do it here in your cafeteria." Well, just tells us to make it happen there. Now, that's pro-activeness, building those relationships. Those relationships count. Focus on what you do, and you do best. Targeting different businesses, or industries, law enforcement, fire, military."*

*E2: "But I think anything positive that the university does, is going to reflect positively and have my degree have higher weight in somebody's mind. If they continue to excel and are named like best communication school in the country, well, even though I'm not going there currently, then that just raises the clout of my education. It's kind of fickle, where it could go both ways, and I've seen it go both ways. But I think that if the community or if the university is doing something positive within the community, then that can only help its alumni raise the clout of their education."*

*A4: "A lot of what I see there too is-- I guess [School 2], for example, they do have a lot of video content that shows a little bit of what they've done in the community, whether it's donations or-- I think the best way you can give besides-- Obviously, money is nice, but I think the biggest value is your time. I think if you showcase a lot of the time that you put into the community and get that voice heard from around the area, that's the biggest impact that I've seen. I've seen [School 2] too, I've seen [School 3] do it. I've seen [School 1] do it, but more so, I think in the Dade City area as opposed to Tampa Bay."*

### Sub-Themes

In the discussion regarding the Integration theme, two sub-themes were discovered in the coding process. The Integration theme focuses on those activities and

attributes of universities that cause them to be part of the “fabric” of the community. The operational integration sub-theme suggests that there are activities in which the HEIs engage that are overt, tangible and assist the HEI in reaching outside of its physical boundaries. In the case of the institutional integration sub-theme, the activities are those that are driven by or are an integral part, of the institution itself. An example would be universities developing and maintaining alliances with local organizations. These subthemes were discussed in the context of the Integration theme as they are directly linked to the concept, as opposed to being a subset of multiple other themes. The subthemes discussed below differ from these in that they have a relationship with more than one of the four major themes, and thus are addressed individually. These four sub-themes are:

1. Students
2. Values
3. Community
4. Experience

This research focuses on asking two questions regarding the influence of economic and business development on brand equity in the HEI domain. First, what is the impact of those activities on the brand image of universities on a local basis? Second, what is the impact on the brand dimension of loyalty? The sub-themes below, and the associated codes, address those research questions.

### The Student Sub-Theme

*ED2: When you see students leaving campus to go and do some volunteer things. For example, when the privacy fence was put up around the domestic violence shelter. We had a slew of super enthusiastic college kids from here, showed up to pull nails out of boards and figure out how to get things done. They didn't know one end of a hammer from the other, but they had the enthusiasm and the caring to want to see it through. It's 90-degrees and they showed up early and stuck with it though the rest of us left.*

Perhaps it should not be remarkable that students, and their activities, play a part in all four of the major themes revealed in the study. They are, after all, the primary *raison d'etre* of HEIs, especially in the case of teaching institutions such as School 1. The sub-theme of students can be found in all three phases of this investigation: the literature review, the interviews in study 1 and the Delphi in study 2. The role of students in the interviews was particularly useful in addressing the research questions in this study. It is notable that all the participants, to greater or lesser degrees, cited students as an important part of university branding.

Much of the existing literature regarding students and brand equity, or its dimensions, focuses on how the students view the institution, primarily with regard to sports, faculty and campus amenities (Casidy, 2013; Clark et al., 2009). However, a more limited set does recognize the importance of students, their impact on the institution, and their relationships with external stakeholders. Sullivan (2013) discusses the importance of students in the community and their impact on the local workforce, notably in the context of business schools. Sullivan argues that preparing students for their role in the business

community has not always been a priority for larger research schools, but that must change if HEIs are to build sound reputations in their local communities.

O'Connor, Lynch, and Owen (2010), in their investigation of student engagement in local communities, describe those related activities as a crucial part of the university's role in the community and that the engagement not only supports superior student outcomes but also the way in which the institution is perceived in the community. Bowen (2013) discusses the need for a shift from focusing on the campus experience to an educational paradigm that places students in experiential and applied pedagogies, and that these will not only produce a better student but also reflect positively on the institution. In their investigation of the outcomes of a cooperative effort between Ford Motor Company and business students, Aurand, Clair, and Sullivan (2012) found that while the students and Ford benefitted from the practical experience, the university itself benefitted from an improved presence and visibility in the business community. Much as with image, the literature regarding the impact of students on external stakeholders' brand loyalty towards the university is largely absent, and when present tends to focus on sports and the campus experience (Bowen, 2013; Clark et al., 2009).

However, in the interviews students featured prominently in the participants' evaluations of the two brand equity dimensions of interest. These evaluations varied from the very serious, as characterized by the story told by one ED participants about the value of students assisting with the redevelopment research for their community to somewhat whimsical stories of students attempting to install a fence for a domestic abuse shelter. The impact of the former might be obvious in its influence on brand equity as it was a

serious and badly needed undertaking. However, the latter was, in many ways, even more impactful in regards to the two dimensions, especially loyalty. The students, carpentry skills notwithstanding, made a lasting impression.

The following codes are representative of those addressing the research questions, in the context of the student sub-theme.

*A1: Yes. I think that the business community has great respect for the university and the quality of education. I think that that is helpful when the local EDCs are recruiting companies to the area. They can say, "Look at the quality or the caliber of students that we have and that are graduating from our university." It's also really valuable, the type of technology that has spun out of the university, as well. Companies want to be around other like companies.*

*E1: Whether they do or not I don't know because when you're in that position, you may not realize that "I've got this problem, I've got issues with my business. Gee, maybe somebody in the local University could help me with that. Maybe students could make a project out of it and help me deal with my problems and straighten out my business."*

*ED2: If you are the employer and you've seen some of these kids actually doing for others -- when that youngster, you may or may not know them personally, but when they ask for an application or for an interview, or whatever, I think the employers are far more willing to sit down with the youngster. Even if their thoughts of hiring are kind of on the back burner, but that outward presence of your student body is attractive to the employer community. Whether it's in a chamber activity, a Rotary Club activity, Kiwanis, you pick it, a volunteer activity of some sort. It matters in terms of the perception that community has toward the institution and those kids individually.*

*ED6: Communities have a need for somebody who have expertise in finding out new things to help them do that. Examples are, of course, when we needed something in Dade City we said, "[Name Redacted], can you help us with this stuff in Dade City?" [Redacted] said, "I've got some students and these students are going to be doing research. I bet you they could help you." They have helped.*

### Values as a Sub-Theme

*A4: When you talk about your brand or what your values and beliefs are, you etch that into the students that attend there. They're going to give back and that's going to portray that entire city. Obviously, at School 1 it's the core values, right? When I left School 1, I still knew all the core values and I knew them by heart.*

Values as a theme is, by its very nature, more challenging to identify in the codes.

As the focus of the interviews was primarily economic development and its relationship to brand equity, few, if any, of the questions addressed the sub-theme in a direct manner. Similarly, given the emphasis on economic development, little of the literature employed in this research speaks to the topic. Blewitt (2010) addresses the topic indirectly in arguing that higher education can contribute to social and community well-being and that business schools play a role in this. Gordon and Jack (2010) note that in their interaction with small business, universities can develop ‘social capital’ which engenders values benefitting stakeholders both in the HEI and in the business community. The literature also addresses the contribution HEIs make to communities via economic and business development (Ahmad & Ingle, 2011).

However, the participants provided a very different perspective than those in the literature that focused on the direct contributions provided by the HEIs the authors investigated. In the case of the codes shown below, the role of values tends to focus on the values the participants believe are displayed by either students or faculty, with an emphasis on the former; or the values inherent in the HEIs, especially in the case of School 1. In most cases, the participants associate the perceived values in relation to some activity in which the students or faculty engage, which supports the overall premise of this research that such activities contribute to the brand equity of the institution.

*A2: I was really attracted to School 1 for that reason and just the fact School 1 had a lot of good solid core values. That my family and my dad went to Catholic school, high school. He really believed in the model and he thought he got a great education, a very smart man. I thought it was just something that fit for me just fine.*

*ED4: Right away, you go, "Wow, that's cool." Not only does it come down to the name of the sorority but wow, they're from School 1. That's a whole other subset of the big picture that-- Oh, I just think that helps, kind of going back to the core values, one of the very early questions. For me, when I see them going, "Hey, they want to spend a Sunday afternoon, hanging out with people in need that don't know when the next meal is coming from," says a lot about not only that student but also the kind of stuff that's being taught to them in the environment that they're existing and living at for their school.*

*A4: No, there is a difference. School 1 has core values that are etched in pretty much everything that they do. School 2 has nothing to note of. School 3 has a little bit of it, but they also have a lot of students that are -- I guess to compare it, School 1 has a lot of people that are on campus council. School 3 has a lot of people that travel to the school.*

#### The Community Sub-Theme

*ED1: Well, rather than just sitting there and seeing how it plays out, the university president might pick the phone up and say to the head of the county board of commission, "Well, you know we might, if you think that will be useful, we might be able to help with that flooding problem or something." And maybe it's just putting student volunteers to do sandbags if it's like a crisis, or it might be something like you got flood control experts and like, "Hey, let us work with you and let's see if we can work on with the people who do drainage to bring best practices to the community or whatever it might be." I just think there's-- again, and probably just looking for opportunities and then going after them, pursuing them is how you build that reputation or that brand.*

The Community sub-theme plays a role in both the research questions regarding loyalty and image and in the major themes of Presence and Integration. Remember that in the former theme the emphasis is on the premise that simply by its presence in the community, absent of any overt action, the university plays a role in supporting business and economic development. For example, one participant described the value of being

able to tell firms interested in the community that the nearby university offered cultural activities, something important to the owners and senior managers of the firms.

The Integration theme is equally important to the sub-theme of community as its premise is that the HEI becomes an integral part of the community, stepping beyond the cliché of the ivory tower. In doing so, they positively impact local ED and community well-being. A case noted earlier in the student sub-theme discussion is that of the students helping with repairs at a local domestic abuse shelter. In the view of the community leaders present, the students were becoming part of the town, in effect, integrating into the community.

While the literature relevant to business or economic development rarely addresses the idea of university community involvement, MacLeod (2014) notes that what he terms action research has value in community-based business growth and development and that this may also be beneficial to the university involved. O'Connor, Lynch, and Owen (2011) describe the value for students and the local community in having the two engaged in joint projects. Bacdayan (2002), in reflecting on the value chamber of commerce leaders place on university involvement in communities, notes that both the community and the HEI may benefit.

The codes below offer some insights into the participants' views on the sub-theme of community.

*A1: There's a number of -- Gosh, this is going to be a long conversation. [laughs] There could be a number of different ways. The more involved that the students are within the community, I think makes a huge impact because you do have opportunities for internships, for projects, things like that and the interns could turn into full-time positions.*



*ED6: That's just the way it is in higher ed. For those who aren't an institution famous in sports, you have to work a little harder to be community partners. You do that by either having people participate in activities in town, or hopefully your students could participate things in town, or you offer things that get people in town to come to you and be part of the campus so that they get to know you and it's not just Saturday football season.*

*ED1: I felt like School I was really starting to have some very significant impact. I mean it may have had that before and I just didn't know about it, but I felt like you were really expanding your presence in the community.*

*A2: You know that's a big thing for me. I think that that's one of the things we lack as a country, people don't get out of the four walls and off of the phone and electronic device to get out and know their community. Student volunteerism, I think that that will transcend in their adult life and I think that's big. I think it shows the community that you care that the university cares.*

*A1: When you have individuals that are not familiar with the Tampa Bay Area scene, with this great university town, it looks like fun, maybe I want to visit there, okay? That's good for tourism. On the other side, it's just, if you live in the community and you see that university pride, you feel more pride for your own community and so I think that's also really important, as well for keeping people in the area and also keeping students local*

*A3: I think the impact of universities in a community, especially from an economic development perspective, is education drives everything. If you are going to attract companies or industries into an area, one of the first things they're going to ask about is the educational system, be it from kindergarten to 12th grade or post-high school.*

*E3: Because the students are giving back, and they-- It helps the business community have an image on the university saying these kids care about the community, about businesses, and maybe there's a way that we don't export that away. We're able to keep them here.*

#### Experience as a Sub-Theme

*E2: I think that universities do a pretty good job of trying to involve businesses in their day-to-day, and then also trying to have networking speed, networking groups, and that kind of thing, which is always helpful. I think that that's beneficial, but one of my main things for wanting to get more involved at the university level is to make sure that these students are leaving with some real-world knowledge, even if they can't get an internship. Because it is such a shock to them when they come out.*

Perhaps more properly a sub-theme falling under the student sub-theme discussed above, given the overwhelming positive perception of student projects, internships and community involvement there is justification for Experience to stand alone as its own sub-theme. This is perhaps best personified by the consistency with which all three segments cited the importance of students in their evaluation of the universities in the study. This was most notable, not surprisingly, on the part of the employers that were particularly focused on the students' involvement with the firms specifically and the business community holistically.

While the literature employed for this research rarely addressed the specific issue of students and their experiences in economic development, there is support in the extant research that this is important. Academics are paying increasingly more attention to this topic, noting the importance of activities such as business plan competitions (Radford, Hunt & Andrus, 2015). and experienced-based class projects (Clark & White, 2010). Holt, Marques, and Way (2012) discuss the importance of experiential and applied learning in preparing Millennials to enter the workforce. On a broader scope, Muthusamy and White (2005), in discussing knowledge transfer between alliance partners, note the social value of the experience gained by all parties in the alliance.

The codes below typify the perceptions of the participants with regard to this sub-theme.

*ED4: I think it's beneficial for the university in giving students or folks in those departments a mechanism to help train and giving that experiential on-the-job training kind of thing. And at the same time, provides - and in my case, it happens to be the city government trying to produce jobs and things - provides an outlet that is very different from somebody that is very much in that business.*

*ED1: I'll tell you what I think is a critical differentiator, and that is finding those hands-on opportunities for students. Because most universities will have a program in, let's say, business, or let's say even more specific marketing... To me, I think that's the heart because that's a general shortcoming of education in America. We teach a lot of theory, and we're really good at educating people who are going to become doctors or lawyers, let's say, but we're not real good at educating basic workers. We've gotten rid of a lot of our practical programs like shop and stuff like that. The university will. I think a key differentiator is that not only does it teach students knowledge but it also gives them opportunities to demonstrate and apply that knowledge. That to me is really important. And I think a robust internship program.*

*E2: I think as an employer, I just see it as strictly positive that they do things with - that they're doing an innovative thing to the city or with students-- I don't really see a downside here. I mean as an employer, it's like, "Great, they're teaching them the art, and they're getting involved here, or they're really shaking things up and that's great." I want to see what their students are capable of and that kind of thing. Overall, I don't see the university doing anything innovative as being negative*

*A3: Absolutely, absolutely, because it gives both the employee and the employer the opportunity to see each other, the opportunity for the employee to get a taste for that particular industry, is this something that I want to do long-term? It's an opportunity for the employer to get somebody with no prior, perhaps, industry experience and bringing them along from ground zero without a lot of bad habits built in that have to be corrected. So internships are very valuable.*

### Interview Code Findings by Research Question

This research aimed to answer four research questions, as discussed in Chapter II.

For each of these, a selection of relevant quotes can be found below. While the participants were unaware of the specific research questions, they were aware that the research was focused on the issue of how economic development activities influenced how they perceived HEIs in general, and as a microcosm, [School 1]. The quotes below

each of the research questions are organized by segment type only in RQ2, which is segment specific in nature. Therefore, no conclusions should be drawn based on the sequence in which the quotes appear. Given that the data consists of over twenty hours of transcribed interviews, it should be obvious that this is only a representative sample. For each question, a mix of segments and relevant participants is included.

RQ1: In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to the brand equity of the institution as perceived by the study participants?

*E1: "I think it's one of the still not fully-appreciated gems that we have here, but I think that's changing. To me, those are the things that the University can do. Provide opportunity, educational, and even economic opportunity, for those of us that live here, bring other people into the area and bring new ideas and new things to our area which has got to be a positive."*

This was the primary research question for the study and was intended to answer the broad issue of the impact that the ED activities in question have on the HEI's brand equity. The interview responses below are not intended to address any specific dimension of brand equity, as those are addressed in RQ3 and RQ4. Also, note that the term "brand equity" was avoided in the interviews as the term may have a far different connotation to lay participants than as it is commonly defined in academic research. The participants were asked to answer the questions first as they pertained to universities generally, and then more specifically to [School 1]. However, not surprisingly, given the nature of the participants, a disproportionate number of responses do focus on [School 1]. Similarly, the participants were not instructed to focus on a specific type of activity, and thus the

answers ranged considerably. This, in itself, provided some insights into what they deemed to be more, or less, important.

The responses addressed a broad gamut of activities in which the schools engaged as well as a number of themes, as discussed above. This was both expected, and hoped for, in the research as it is keeping with the objectives of a qualitative study. As noted by Creswell (2013), one advantage to the method is the revelation of the unexpected, and the technique has been employed in similar studies of the HEI domain (Helmsley-Brown et al., 2016; McAdam & Marlowe, 2008). Allowing for this free flow of concepts supported that objective. While the responses were somewhat unstructured and varied, they generally fell into two categories.

**The first were those** that aligned more closely with the Function theme – those tangible activities that impacted the perceived image of, and loyalty to, the HEI (the two dimensions of brand equity of interest in the study). These tended to be ED or business development activities that, in the experience of the participants, led to more concrete outcomes. If we were to draw an analogy to more conventional product branding, we might associate these activities as the product's physical or utilitarian attributes (Davicik et al., 2015; Keller, 1993, 2003). For example, although the experience is often considered to be a key element in the Starbucks brand, the physical attributes of high quality coffee, comfortable seating and high-speed Wi-Fi may be perceived by customers as equally important.

*A1: "Well, again, I know I mentioned this already, but [School 1] sitting on the PEDC board has been very impactful, and a great example is the micro-loan, right? We've got \$25,000 that was donated for that fund when we first started that up, and the outcomes from that fund have been jobs and new businesses that have been created and businesses that have been saved and jobs retained because of that loan or that investment or that donation, I guess I should say. That's been a great example of the economic impact that [School 1] has had, particularly in the Pasco community."*

*E5: "Particularly, they help the non-profit community which often is much more resource-constraint. Things like doing business research projects, really letting non-profits receive services through incubators and think tanks. For services that nonprofits often could not otherwise afford. It provides a good learning environment for students. I think they could probably, or doing those things could do more of those things or at least publicize more of those things."*

*E3: "You got to make money somewhere. The academics are in the universities and they're the ones that provide the innovative thought, and it's really up to the end user, the pragmatist to take that end product and execute on it and put it into use. .... The universities are critical to creating and maintaining the momentum for innovation. If it wasn't for the university communities, I don't know where that would come from."*

*ED2: "I think [School 1]'s perceived very, very positively and an important part of creating the workforce, creating the employees that, hopefully, will stay. I think probably the biggest concern I hear from some of our elected officials not only in Dade City but across the county is, "How do we keep our graduates home? You have turned out some graduates who have helped companies have huge success. Some outstanding teachers, administrators, solid business people's financial consultants, bankers."*

**The second category** was more in keeping with the Integration theme as described above – those things that the HEI did that made them an integral part of the community's fabric. These quotes tended to identify the less tangible influences (Gupta, Grant & Melewar, 2008) of the activities, even in those cases where there was some overt action on the part of the HEI. Again, drawing an analogy to traditional product branding, these activities would be viewed as the more experiential characteristics of the brand. The importance of these intangible brand assets has been noted in the literature (Bowen, 2013,

Keller 2003). Trapp et al., (2014) describe the importance of intangible attributes such as the student experience and the institution's reputation on the university's brand image. Stephenson and Yerger (2014) note the influence of brand satisfaction and prestige on alumni's likelihood to donate to the institution. The quotes below support the position that the intangible attributes of ED activities play a significant role in the brand perception of the HEI and that this perception crosses all three segments.

*ED1: "I think from the community and to a lesser extent regional perspective. having a university is a great addition. That creates a marketing ability, it creates an addition to the product offering that you have to offer as a community marketer. Why is that, well because you have research sources, you've got a source of talent, you've got a better quality of life because of what the universities typically offer in terms of bringing in arts and music and lectures and writers and all that sort of thing. Definitely, for somebody thinking about relocating a business or even growing a business if they're already there, it adds a lot."*

*A5: "How do we drive the business here? If you have university faculty that are in tune with the community, Chamber of Commerce community, when they understand what their needs are, they can also tailor, if you will, their classes or their offerings to maybe, the hospitality industry. That has a benefit for everybody. It helps the university but helps drives the business and economic development. You know the old saying, "When the tide rises, everybody's boat's rising." It works for everybody."*

*ED4: "Again, I think I'm going to keep it probably positive. But I think it just adds a level of legitimacy, it's another word. I think that knowing that rather than just some consultant you hired from some ABC organization. The fact that you're using it and it can't be -- and I think that may have to do with the university itself."*

*ED6: "The old days of universities going out in the middle of nowhere and being their own island. That's the way it used to be in many cases. Today, there's not as many islands and so it's important to connect in that way to whatever the economics of that community are and try to be somewhat compatible to that."*

RQ2: In what manner does brand equity, as perceived by three key stakeholder groups, differ as a result of the economic development activities in which the university engages?

As we might expect from any heterogeneous product, different segments perceived some product attributes very similarly while viewing others through their own lens. This question was essentially determining how the segments differed in their view of the HEI's branding as a result of the ED activities under study. All three groups placed the same approximate value on the contributions HEIs made to the business and economic development community. However, they differed somewhat in the specific activities that constituted that contribution. For example, all three segments expressed the value of student engagement. However, ED professionals tended to view them as a resource that reflected positively on the brand while alumni were more concerned with the experience from the perspective of the student. The difference is subtle but important.

As with most brands, HEIs have a number of customer segments. In the case of this research, we are interested in three – employers, alumni and ED professionals. And like most brands, these segments see the product or brand through their own lens and place differing values on different product attributes. While all the customer segments of the brand may agree that a given attribute is valuable, they may rank it differently when compared to another attribute (Davicik et al., 2015) As the results relative to RQ 2 show, this is indeed the case with the segments under study and their perceptions of the university. This dynamic is further complicated by a lack of clear and distinct segments –



there was considerable overlap in the characteristics of the three segments. This is not particularly surprising given the nature of the segments of interest.

For example, a firm that regularly hires the university's students as interns or employees might well be managed by an engaged alumnus. The alumni that are in law enforcement, medicine, the military or education (all common for [School 1]) are unlikely to be those firms hiring interns or entry-level employees. This places those business alumni in both the role of an alumnus and that of an employer. Similarly, any number of the local ED professionals tend to hire [School 1] interns and graduates. Does this place them in the alumni or employer or ED segment?

Thus, rather than three distinct "circles" of participants, those in this study more closely resemble a Venn diagram – there is overlap between the three groups. While this represents something of a challenge in analyzing the codes, it also adds a richness to the qualitative "stew". As noted by Soldana (2013), themes often share overlapping characteristics. This proved to be the case with the respondents in the study, and the results in RQ2 must be viewed through that lens.

For each of the three sub-questions (2a, 2b, and 2c) the responses are specific to the segment.

RQ 2a) In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to brand equity as perceived by the key alumni segment of the university's stakeholders?

The alumni segment tended to value those activities or attributes that, in their perception, impacted the reputation of the university in the community, both in business

and at large. They also placed a value on activities that directly impacted students, most notably internships. Although the topic of alumni engagement and brand identification has received limited attention in the literature, there is previous support for this alumni orientation regarding students. Stephenson and Yerger (2014) found that one significant factor in alumni support was a positive impression of student affairs and outcomes, as were those activities that impacted the image or reputation of the university. Of the five alumni interviewed, three expressed strong interest in interacting with the students and all five cited student activities in the community (both internships and civic volunteerism) as being important.

*A4: "Obviously, at [School 1] it's the core values, right? When I left [School 1], I still knew all the core values, and I knew them by heart. I thought to myself-- I don't even know how I knew all of them, but it was written, it was talked about in every class, it was etched in our brain. That's why I think those kinds of initiatives are things that can lead to pretty good stuff as far as the universities make a change."*

*A2: [ in response to a follow-up probe regarding what makes a poor HEI community partner] "One that's quiet and doesn't partner, and doesn't talk, and is not relevant is probably the best word. A university that is training, offering curriculums that are either not relevant, don't have a good transition or don't have the ability to provide placement with industry directly, but just offers somebody the degree. That's a bad value. It stops the education process, in my mind."*

*A1: "There's a number of -- Gosh, this is going to be a long conversation. [laughs] There could be a number of different ways. The more involved that the students are within the community, I think makes a huge impact because you do have opportunities for internships, for projects, things like that and the interns could turn into full-time positions."*

*A1: "That's one thing. Also, the business has an opportunity to tout the university, as a whole, that provided the interns. "Wow, what a great person I had from this university." I think there's another opportunity there, as well, because I know that that happens quite a bit, just from personal experience."*

RQ 2b) In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to brand equity as perceived by the major employer segment of the university's stakeholders?

The "Venn diagram" effect noted above played a strong role in the employer segment. While they were selected for the study based on their history of hiring students (as interns, part-time while enrolled or post-graduate entry level), most of the participants in the segment also play a part, to greater or lesser degrees, in local business and economic development. This is not in any way surprising as it is the business community that hires interns and entry-level students, especially those emerging from the school of business. Their responses, while most often focused on the impact of students and interns on the brand, also reflect their perspective as ED and business leaders.

The importance of students to the brand image of the HEI was expected in this research, as it is supported both by the experience of this researcher and by the literature. In the case of the former, [School 1] students are regularly recognized for their work in ED and business in the Bay area. Most notably are projects for a domestic abuse shelter, two local economic development councils, Dade City redevelopment, Shriner's Hospital and local banks. Regarding the latter, Sullivan (2011) notes the importance of developing the leaders and business innovators of the future and Aurand, Clair and Sullivan (2012) describe the positive outcomes of student engagement with business in their study of a joint project between a major university and Ford Motor Company.

*E1: “Well, obviously, the Incubator is one good way that [School 1] is participating in that. Probably, students with projects could do that kind of thing because they're studying it, they're studying under professionals at universities, and they're doing case studies. They probably have more of an ongoing idea than the guy that's starting his new business that maybe doesn't have a college degree and has never looked at this stuff. I just see those possibilities.”*

*E2: “I think that universities do a pretty good job of trying to involve businesses in their day-to-day, and then also trying to have networking speed, networking groups, and that kind of thing, which is always helpful. I think that that's beneficial, but one of my main things for wanting to get more involved at the university level is to make sure that these students are leaving with some real-world knowledge, even if they can't get an internship. Because it is such a shock to them when they come out.”*

*E4: “Then again, offering the opportunities for those students to work. I love [name redacted]’s idea of the entrepreneurial center aspect, because it would give them maybe something that they could really latch on to and be able to see that there is reason for us to stay, there is reason for us to develop our ideas and became ingrained in the community and part of the community and start a life where we are.”*

*E5: “It really comes down to the awareness of what else they offer and the ease with which you can access the services. At least with a smaller non-profit like us, again, I can't be spending two or three days chasing something down. If there's something easy and quick that I can access that's going to help me like the [Name redacted] Research Institute. Now, whether or not that's going to pan out, I don't know, but the knowing and the ease of accessing is really what makes a difference.”*

RQ 2c) In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to brand equity as perceived by the economic development professionals segment of the university’s stakeholders?

Not surprisingly, the ED professionals valued the same activities as did the alumni, however the perceptual lens was somewhat different. Where the alumni might see a given activity, for example, a chamber of commerce leadership role, as contributing to the school’s community standing or reputation, the ED participants saw the same

activity in a more practical perspective – what did it do for local business. The influence on the brand was an outcome of that impact, and that perspective is reflected in the quotes below.

*ED4: “I'm thinking of just having and bringing a whole -- because people are coming because of the university and not necessarily because it's in, I'm going to use Dade City as an example. I think there's again, a reason to attract talent, businesses or some information base that probably wouldn't come it weren't -- again it's not because it's in Providence, Rhode Island or Dade City, Florida or even Tampa, Florida, but because there is something Yale or [School 1] or whatever you've got that go, "Wow, that is a great place and so-and-so came from there." And that, just by itself just elevates that bar up to a whole different level.”*

*ED3: “That they're going to impact that area, not just from their interaction with business, but their civic interaction in making sure that community does well. Most college towns I've been in have great schools, high school, middle school, and secondary schools because of the fact that the professors take an active interest in making sure their children have the best in there. There are some other byproducts that are more civic in nature.”*

*ED1: “Maybe there's a community problem or something. Well, rather than just sitting there and seeing how it plays out, the university president might pick the phone up and say to the head of the county board of commission, "Well, you know we might, if you think that will be useful, we might be able to help with that welding problem or something.” [in this quote ED1 was referring to HEIs helping with more than just their specific majors, in this case trades, an on-going problem in Florida].*

*ED6: “Communities have a need for somebody who have expertise in finding out new things to help them do that. Examples are, of course, when we needed something in Dade City we said, “[name redacted], can you help us with this stuff in Dade City?” S/he said, "I've got some students and these students are going to be doing research. I bet you they could help you." They have helped.”*

RQ3: In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to the brand image dimension of brand equity?

Brand equity has a number of dimensions (Keller, 1993) however, this research focused on only two of these – image and loyalty. RQ3 asks specifically how the image

dimension is impacted by ED activities. These responses tended to be very wide-ranging. In some cases, the participants addressed the image question directly and in others, the responses were less specific and more intuitive, as demonstrated in the sample quotes below. As noted in the foundation research in branding, brand image is most often characterized as the associations, perceptions, and relationships the customer has with the brand (Aaker, 1991; Ambler, 1997; Farquhar, 1989; Keller, 1993, 2003). This view of the dimension is reflected in the codes below – the participants had both very distinct, concrete brand images of the university and less tangible perceptions as a result of the activities discussed. Note that these are presented in no particular order, and no ranking or weight should be inferred.

*ED2: “You are now beginning to see some kind of institutional culture, values, expectations. If you're going to be with us, these are among the things we believe strongly in. They get internalized because you see them everywhere you walk on campus, who you're talking to in the library or the Student Center, or whatever. Those things become ingrained in their culture.”*

*E2: “I think schools think that being involved in like tech incubators and having business people on boards, I think they all view those as very innovative. And we all are pulling from the same group. So for us, it's wonderful to see, the university that's doing the right thing and making sure that their students are kept abreast of the newest things that are coming out onto the market.”*

*E3: [in response to a question regarding effective HEI/ED partnerships] “They already did, they already understand the importance of education and having educational institutions. When they go out in the market to site selectors and market to the big companies out there, the assets of Pasco County, educational institutions needs to be high on the list. Just because you list the institution, it's not good enough. The institution has to be engaged as well. It's critical at the economic development level that that engagement is there.”*

*E5: "I think every time universities are doing things that support the community. When they do branded volunteer work and branded outreach, for which there is publicity. Let's plant a tree day. Let's do outreach at the homeless shelter, in a branded way. I think that those things help build broader goodwill within the community generally because of the visibility of outcome with brand. But, beyond that, it's much more ephemeral. It's, "I see [School 1] have commercials on TV, I drive by there. It's very busy.""*

*A4: "Yes, I think so. It comes down to sometimes the majors that they have and what surrounds them. But at the end of the day, a lot of what I see is, are the universities giving their students opportunities once they graduate. I think that's the biggest thing that I've seen and I think as far as aligning themselves with the community when you've got a university, and they have multiple graduates, ideally, we would like to send them off into places nearby to help develop that city. We want talent that's going to be coming from Tampa and not necessarily from outside, even though we have a few of those guys." [in response to being asked if there are specific things universities do that particularly important to their image]*

*A5: "I know this. If we were to get a large employer out here, we could sit down with [School 1] and Pasco-Hernando State College and the local universities and colleges with that employer and say, "Here's the skill set we need, can you develop a program around it?" We know that [School 1] would say, "Yes, we can." We know because we've seen it.*

*First, Joe and Jane Taxpayer, they're so -- Many of them till they get a little older or whatever caught up in their own daily lives, so I don't know to what extent they view [School 1] at. From my interactions with these folks, many of their kids have gone to [School 1], I think they view it as an incubator to success for the county because just think of what the county would be if you didn't have [School 1]. If you didn't have all these people graduate -- There was a study done that most people when they graduate from college stay within 50 or 75 miles of where they graduated from college at. Look at the business impact [School 1] has. I don't think Raymond James would have decided to come to Pasco County if it wasn't for [School 1]"*

RQ4: In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to the brand loyalty dimension of brand equity?

The second dimension of interest in this study, loyalty, was somewhat more difficult to extract from the participants. As discussed in Chapter II, the concept of brand

loyalty in the HEI domain has received little attention in the academic research (Chapelo, 2010). This may be due in part to the difficulty in defining what constitutes loyalty to an HEI, beyond that associated with sports or donations, neither of which is of particular interest in this study. Typically, in branding research loyalty is considered to be the likelihood that a given consumer will buy a given brand to the exclusion of other similar brands on a consistent basis (Felix, 2014). Clearly, that does not serve this study well as our participants do not “buy” the HEI brand. Thus, in this study loyalty was operationalized as the likelihood of the participant to select the university’s students for employment as opposed to another institution’s or the likelihood that the participant (or their firm/organization) would select the institution for research, development or consulting projects as opposed to another institution.

Understandably, in some cases, the participants were not clear on what constituted ‘loyalty’ to the institution. Second level open probes helped clarify this. For example, a follow-up probe might have asked the participant “what would lead them to hire one university’s interns or graduates over another.” This is consistent with the definitions established in Chapters I and II and yielded both some specific responses and others that are less precise and concrete, but nonetheless indicative of the dimension. The sample below reflects that paradigm.

*ED6: “Well, there's a couple. One, I have to go to the project [redacted] and [name redacted – a [School 1] faculty] students did for us in Dade City Chamber because we actually -- you know how chamber boards, they change, they come and go. Those of us who were there then continue to reference that study. That's very important to us.” [note that the participant is referring to a market research study conducted by [School 1] undergraduates].*



*A4: "I think a lot of that comes to probably past experience with interns. That's why it's so important when universities are giving certain internships, that that person who you think is going to be a good fit for that internship because one person can make me think that the university is trustworthy with an intern or not."*

*ED6: "I think it's really simple and is the same as it would be for any other business. They must have a good experience when they interact with the university in some way. As long as I have that good experience, you have the disposition to have a favorable influence. If something happened though, and they had something negative, whatever it may be, then that's the challenge to overcome."*

*A2: "It's kind of a given, that's the whole mission around [School 1], giving back to the community. [School 1] by far that's one of the Catholic principles, it's giving back to the community that they're in. And I think that that speaks volumes, you don't see that at a lot of other places, it gets you in, get you out, get your degree. At [School 1] you're part of a community, and it's kind of expected when you're a graduate you give back."*

### Study Two: Delphi

In Study One, the sixteen participants provided a wealth of qualitative data that revealed four themes. While, as noted in the discussion above, some of these were, to greater or lesser degrees, anticipated based on the literature and past experience of this researcher, others were less expected, and the qualitative methodology served the purpose of revealing these unexpected findings. Further, the coded quotes provided a wealth of information for the addressing the research questions. In both cases, this application of qualitative methodology is supported in the literature both for the method generally and for the domain under investigation. These interviews fulfilled the initial or exploratory stage of the Delphi methodology as described by Day and Bobeva (2005) and Story et al., (2001).

As with the exploratory nature of the interview method used in phase one of this research, in the second phase of the research the objective was to leverage the expertise

of the participants to explore consensus on emergent themes, which are discussed in detail in Chapter II. As is the case with the interviews, the Delphi method is particularly well suited for research for which there is a dearth of extant literature on which to draw (Story et al., 2001). Two advantages of the method are addressing research issues for which there is limited information available either in the literature or from practitioner experience (Story et al., 2001; Kelly, 2007) and applying the consensus of experts in the field of study to address research interests (Day & Bobeva, 2005).

While a Delphi study may consist of as many as ten rounds, the far more common practice, and that adopted by this research, is two to three rounds (Day & Bobeva, 2005). In the first of the two rounds, the original sixteen participants were sent a Qualtrics questionnaire consisting of five questions.

A copy of the email text requesting their participation can be found in Appendix C and Appendix D and the survey questions in Appendix F and Appendix G. Of the sixteen participants, fifteen responded.

The results of the first round of the Delphi study, organized around the themes that were identified in the interview stage and the research questions, are discussed below. Each of the five questions in the first phase of the Delphi study used the same thirteen items shown below.

The descriptive statistics produced by SPSS can be found in Appendix H.

1. Student internships
2. Pro-bono faculty consulting
3. Incubators

4. Student volunteerism
5. Faculty participation in local boards or community organizations
6. Workforce development
7. Student consulting projects
8. Opening campus arts and culture to the community
9. Entrepreneurial education
10. Small business support and development
11. Student interaction with alumni
12. Advertising or promoting the university
13. University leadership visibility or involvement in the community

#### Discussion of Delphi Study Round 1

Based on the stakeholders identified in Chapters I and II and the interviews, the ED activities that the participants were asked to rate in the survey were divided into three categories:

*Perceived reputation* – those activities that the research proposes will be most valued by alumni.

*Student-centric* – those activities that the research proposes will be most valued by employers

*Business-centric* – those activities that the research proposes will be most valued by ED professionals.

The activities assigned to each category were determined by how the participants most often described their perceptions of the activities in the interviews and how they

aligned with the revealed themes as shown in the table below. Note that in some cases a given item may be associated with more than one segment.

Table 6  
*Survey Items by Segment*

Trait	Segment	Survey Items
Visibility/image centric	Alumni	Campus arts and culture
		Student/alumni interaction
		Promoting/advertising the university
		Leadership involvement
Student centric	Employers	Workforce development
		Internships
		Student volunteerism
		Workforce development
Business centric	ED Experts	Student consulting
		Entrepreneurial education
		Faculty consulting
		Incubators
		Faculty participation in local boards/civic groups
		Workforce development
		Entrepreneurial education
		Small business development

#### Research Question 1

*RQ1: In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to the brand equity of the institution as perceived by differing stakeholder segments?*

The intent of RQ1 is to explore the broad relationship between the value of a given activity in which the HEI engages as perceived by the participant and the impact that activity has on the perceived brand equity of the institution. This is keeping with conventional views of brand equity which describe the concept as the way in which a

brand or product is perceived by its customers as a result of some application of the marketing mix (Aaker, 1992; Davcik et al.; 2013 Keller, 1993, 2003). In the case of this study, the customers are the three segments of HEI stakeholders (sixteen participants in total) and the marketing mix component(s) are the local ED or business development activities in which the HEI participated.

The literature review and the subsequent interviews suggest that the more positively the activity is perceived, the greater the positive influence on the brand equity of the institution. This was explored by two survey questions:

*Q1: On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being less favorable and 7 being more favorable, please rate how favorably you view each of the following activities in which universities engage in support of local economic and community development.*

*Q2: On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being very low influence and 7 being very high influence, please rate the extent to which each of following activities influences your overall perception of a university.*

In question one, the participants rated how they valued each of the activities revealed in the interviews. In question two, the participants were asked to rate how the same activities influenced their perception of the institution. The two questions were then analyzed using Wilcoxon nonparametric analysis in SSPS. The Wilcoxon analysis is useful when there are small sample sizes and the data is not normally distributed, both of which apply to this research (Spatz, 2008). To determine if there is a relationship between the value the respondents placed on a given activity and the influence of that activity on their perception of the institution, the Wilcoxon analysis was run for each of the activities

for all respondents. The results are displayed in the table below. The “perceived value” column was the respondents’ response to the survey question asking their perception of the value of the given activity to local ED and the “HEI perception” is the response to the survey question asking how the given activity influenced their perception of the university (perceived brand equity).

Table 7  
*Wilcoxon Results for Perceived Brand Equity*

Survey Item (activity)	Mean – perceived value	Mean – HEI perception	P value	Z score
Internships	5.66	5.66	.861	-.175
Faculty pro-bono consulting	5.73	5.46	.430	-.790
Incubators	5.73	5.73	1.00	.000
Student volunteerism	5.73	5.53	.655	-.447
Faculty participation in local organizations	6.266	6.226	.722	-.356
Workforce development	5.86	6.00	.964	-.045
Student consulting	5.46	5.00	.053	-1.93
Opening campus arts and culture	5.60	5.86	.340	-.954
Entrepreneurial education	6.13	6.06	.660	-.439
Small business development	5.80	5.93	.458	-.743
Student/alumni interaction	5.26	4.60	.046	-1.996
HEI leadership visibility/participation	6.13	6.66	.168	-1.378

## Research Question 2

*RQ2: In what manner does brand equity, as perceived by three key stakeholder groups, differ as a result of the economic development activities in which the university engages?*

*RQ 2a) In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to brand equity as perceived by the key alumni segment of the university’s stakeholders?*

*RQ 2b) In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to brand equity as perceived by the major employer segment of the university's stakeholders?*

*RQ 2c) In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to brand equity as perceived by the economic development professionals segment of the university's stakeholders?*

As has been observed elsewhere in this research (see Chapter II) and in the literature, different customer segments may assign dissimilar or varying value(s) to given product or brand attributes both for brands generally (Felix, 2014; French & Smith, 2013; Keller, 2003) and specifically in the HEI domain (Cassidy, 2013; Stephenson & Yerger, 2014). While the value-conscious or practical customer may place a higher value on tangible or applied attributes of the product, other customers may place a higher value on hedonic or intangible characteristics of the product. In the case of the activities discovered in the coded interviews, both categories of HEI product attributes were revealed, in most cases by a plurality of the participants. For example, many of the participants described the value of student internships and incubators, both concrete and tangible activities as being highly valued while, at the same time noting that there is a value in the intangible characteristic of simply being an open campus with a nice ambiance.

Much as would be expected from any complex product, the different stakeholders had varying perceptions of those attributes and assigned them value accordingly. In some cases, the differences were pronounced while in others they were relatively minor and the

different groups were largely in agreement regarding the impact the activity had on the institution's brand equity.

Note that the term "equity" is used in branding and brand studies far differently than in any other field and may be confusing to even an experienced business person. Consequently, the term was not used in the questionnaire. Rather, the phrase "overall perception" was employed as it captures the essence of the concept. Conceptually, this is supported by the literature which is generally consistent in describing brand equity as the differential enjoyed by the brand as a result of customer perception and attitude towards the brand (Davicik et al., 2013; Keller, 1993, 2003)

#### Research Question 2a: Alumni Findings

In exploring the consensus of the alumni participants, they consistently identified workforce development (mean/standard deviation = 6.8, .447), a common theme in the interviews, as being the most important factor in the visibility and reputation of the university. This may be due in part to the alumni all, to greater or lesser degrees, working in management roles and in all cases received their degrees in business or business-related fields. However, the alumni participants were consistent in their interviews that having students prepared for entering the workforce was important to the image and visibility of the university. Closely related to this was the idea of student interaction with the alumni as a path to job readiness, (mean/standard deviation = 6.0, 1.73) which was also identified in the interviews as building the visibility of the institution, although this item was not as consistent in the survey as shown by the comparatively high standard deviation. The alumni, not surprisingly, identified the visibility of the institution's



leadership as important to its reputation and image. It is interesting to note that not all alumni shared this perception. This is consistent with the interviews in which the alumni expressed both positive and negative views of university senior staff, in some cases by the same individual in what might be colloquially viewed as a love/hate relationship. While the participant valued the leadership of the school, they did not necessarily see them as having a large impact on brand image or loyalty. Finally, despite more than one alumni participant commenting on the importance of “marketing/branding/promoting” the university the survey results did not support this as being important to visibility or image (mean = 5.4). In support of addressing RQ 2a, the participants identified three of the five proposed items found to be important to the segment.

#### Research Question 2b: Employer Findings

As anticipated in the research question, the employer segment most valued those items that prepared students to enter the workforce, placed them in the workforce as interns or otherwise involved them in business projects. These student-centric activities are, in the perception of the employer segment, more important to their overall perception of the institution than any others in the survey with the exception of university leadership visibility. This is consistent with the codes revealed in the interviews that indicated the image of the university is enhanced by having students out of the classroom and into the business community.

Four items in the survey support this position. Internships, workforce development, student consulting and entrepreneurial education all resulted in means of

6.0 or higher with comparatively low standard deviations. Consequently, RQ 2b is largely addressed by the survey findings.

#### Research Question 2c: Economic Development Professionals Findings

Research question 2c asks if the economic development participants favor those activities that contribute to the growth of local business and economic development as having the greatest influence on the brand equity of the institution. Six items were predicted, based on the literature and interviews, as being valued by this group (incubators, faculty consulting, faculty participation in local organizations, workforce development, entrepreneurial education and small business development). Four of these received means at or above 6.0, suggesting that the participants do indeed place a high value on these activities in evaluating their perception of the institution.

The themes revealed in the interviews supported the expectation that faculty consulting (mean = 6.33), entrepreneurial education (mean = 6.0), small business development (mean = 6.5) and workforce development (mean = 6.66) would all be highly rated by this segment. This is not only consistent with the interview findings but also with the literature discussed in both this chapter and the literature review in Chapter II, and thus is in no way unexpected.

The surprising result is that these economic development professionals were far less consistent in their evaluation of incubators. Again, both the interviews and the literature supported the expectation that these were valued by this segment. One possible explanation is that the ED professionals did not connect the value of the incubator to the institution's image, despite the involvement of the university in the incubator. Two items

that were not predicted to be important to the economic development participants were student consulting (mean = 6.33) and student/alumni interaction (mean = 6.5). In retrospect, the former was an oversight given the high praise revealed in the interviews for student projects in the local community. However, there was little to nothing in the interviews with the ED participants that would suggest their interest in alumni interaction.

Given the rating for four of the six proposed ED activities, RQ 2c is partial consensus is reached by the ED participants.

### Research Question 3

*RQ3: In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to the brand image dimension of brand equity?*

As noted elsewhere, this investigation is confined to two dimensions of brand equity; image and loyalty. This research question addresses the former of these and asks if there will be a positive relationship between the value that a participant places on a given activity in which the HEI engages and the influence that activity has on brand image. This is consistent with the generally accepted view of brand image in the literature that image is the manner in which customers perceive brand attributes, characteristics and feature/functionality (Davicik et al., 2013; French & Smith, 2013; Keller, 2003). This perception of brand image is also found in the limited research concerning HEI branding (Chapelo, 2010; Trapp et al., 2014).

In the Delphi questionnaire the participants were asked to rate the value they placed on a given set activities and the extent to which those activities influenced their

perception of the brand image of the institution. Question 4 asked the participants to rate the extent to which each activity influenced their perception of a university's brand image:

*Q4: Considering those same activities in which universities engage in support of local economic and community development, on a scale of 1 to 7 with 1 being very low influence and 7 being very high influence, to what extent does each positively influence your perception of the university's brand image?*

As has been the case with other research questions, the alumni proved to be most conservative segment in evaluating the activities in question and in reaching consensus. None were rated by alumni as highly as they were in the other two segments. The most surprising result was that interacting with students had relatively low evaluations with regard to brand image. However, they did favor entrepreneurial education.

The employer segment heavily favored those activities that had a direct bearing on preparing the students for the workforce or those that impacted their experiential education. As with other questions, student internships were rated highly (mean = 6.75) as were student consulting projects and workforce development (6.0 and 6.25, respectively). This segment also placed a very high value on faculty participating in the community, suggesting that employers see the faculty role as not only positively influencing their perception of the institution, but also important to preparing the students for the workforce through non-classroom activities.

Of the three segments, the ED professionals were by far the most enthusiastic about the relationship between the activities under study and the institution's brand

image. As discovered in addressing the other research questions, they favored those activities that engaged both faculty and students in the business and economic development communities in active and tangible roles. Internships, faculty consulting, faculty participation in the community and entrepreneurial education all received high marks (mean of 6.2 or above). This is consistent with the interviews, in which the ED segment repeatedly noted the value of seeing both groups in the community. In some cases, these were roles related to business, such as students conducting research for a local chamber of commerce; in other cases, they were for roles purely of a civic nature such as performing repairs at a domestic violence center. In the case of the former, two of the participants specifically noted the value of the students' work on the community's image of the school.

Despite the lukewarm results in some regards from the alumni segment, the segment largely answered the research question in finding a relationship between the ED activities they most favor and their perception of the institution's brand image.

#### Research Question 4

*RQ4: In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to the brand loyalty dimension of brand equity?*

The generally accepted definition of brand loyalty is the preference the consumer demonstrates by purchasing one brand over another in a given category, on a regular or consistent basis (Keller, 1993; Felix, 2014). As previously noted, brand loyalty in this study represented a challenge in that this traditional definition is not well suited to relationship between the participants and HEIs, in that the participants are not likely to

purchase the institution's "product" in the conventional sense. Consequently, this research defined loyalty as the likelihood that the participants would select the institution for projects within their firms or organizations rather than another HEI (survey question 3) or would employ the students from the institution rather than those from another school (survey question 5), both of which are activities that may often be related to local economic development.

Research question asks how that brand loyalty will be positively influenced by those activities that the participants value. As with the other research questions, this variability in loyalty by customer segment is supported in the literature both for brands generally (Felix, 2014) and for the HEI domain (Bowen, 2013; Nguyen et al., 2016).

Two survey questions were used to determine brand loyalty:

*Q3: On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being very low influence and 7 being very high influence, to what extent would each of the following activities influence your likelihood to consistently select one university as opposed to another for economic or business development projects for your firm or organization?*

*Q5: On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being very low influence and 7 being very high influence, to what extent would each of the following activities influence your likelihood to consistently hire one university's interns or recent graduates as opposed to another university's?*

The results of the first phase of the Delphi study for RQ 4 are as follows.

### Alumni Segment Findings

As in other research questions, none of the activities predicted to be important to alumni in determining brand loyalty were highly rated in the survey. This is surprising given the responses in the interviews in which the alumni participants expressed interest in interacting with students and in the visibility of the institution's leadership. Further, the alumni showed relatively little preference for any of the activities in the survey. This suggests two possibilities. First, that even though the alumni selected for participation in the study were considered to be engaged or close to the university, they may, in fact, have relatively little loyalty to the institution as it is measured in the study. Their loyalty may, in fact, be largely confined to donations although that is not supported by the interviews. Thus, we have something of a paradox that may warranted future investigation.

In the question regarding the participants' likelihood to select one university over another for projects in their business or organization the only two items that are more highly regarded are student internships and entrepreneurial education. This might suggest that the alumni are primarily motivated to be loyal to the institution if the activities are student-centric. However, in question 5 (student hiring) they showed little loyalty as a result of internships or student consulting, both activities highly related to students.

Based on the results of the survey, the segment did not demonstrate a consensus on this research question.

## Employer Segment Findings

Based on the literature and interview results, four items were predicted to be important to the employer segment in determining brand loyalty; internships, student volunteerism, workforce development, and student consulting. Note that in question five in the survey, internships were deleted as an item as being redundant. The question was specifically asking what would cause the respondent to be loyal in selecting one university's students over another as interns or new hires.

In question three, asking what items would influence the respondent to select one university over another for projects for their company, internships were rated very high (mean = 6.75) as were student consulting projects (mean = 6.5). Neither of these is surprising as they are both consistent with the interviews and literature. In the interviews, the employer participants cited student projects in the community as a primary influence in how they, and others in the business community, perceived the institution. Workforce development, a student-centric activity but also vital to economic development, was also highly rated (mean = 6.5).

In question five, regarding loyalty as a factor in the likelihood of the participant to hire one university's students as opposed to another competing university's students, the outcomes also strongly supported the influence of student-centric activities in creating brand loyalty among this segment. Keeping in mind that the "internship" item was removed as an option to avoid redundancy, student consulting actually rose slightly (mean = 6.75), workforce development remained highly rated (mean = 6.25), and entrepreneurial education was also favorably viewed (mean = 6.0). A surprising finding



was the influence faculty involvement in local organizations had on the likelihood of the respondents to select students from the university. In retrospect, respondents from more than one of the segments referred to one or more specific faculty members when discussing the value of student projects, consulting and internships which may suggest that in the perception of the participants the faculty leader or advisor is integral to the success of the students in the project or internship.

Given the responses from the employer segment, a high level of consensus within the segment was revealed for this research question.

#### Economic Development Segment Findings

Five items were predicted to be important to the ED professionals in creating brand loyalty to the university: faculty consulting, incubators, faculty participation in local organizations, entrepreneurial education and small business development.

For this segment, their evaluation of brand loyalty was striking. With regard to selecting one university over a competing school for company projects faculty pro-bono consulting in the community, faculty participation in local organizations, and entrepreneurial education all were rated at a mean of 6.0 or higher. Small business development was rated at 7.0 with a standard deviation of zero. Incubators, despite their importance to ED in the literature and interviews, were not rated highly by the segment when deciding to select one university over another. This was also true for the segment when deciding on one university over another for selecting interns or new hires. This might suggest that while, in both the interviews and the literature, ED professionals value incubators, this evaluation has little impact on brand loyalty to the institution.

In question five, only two of the predicted items were identified by the respondents as rated at a mean of 6.0 or higher in influencing their loyalty to the institution as measured by their likelihood to select the school's students as opposed to a competing school: small business development (mean = 6.2) and entrepreneurial education (mean = 6.0). While the latter is not surprising as in the interviews experiential or entrepreneurial education was identified as being valued, the link between small business development and a propensity to hire one university's students as opposed to another's is absent in the interview coding and in the literature. The ED participants did identify small business development as being important to them in their overall evaluation of universities. Thus, this outcome may be attributable to a spillover or halo effect – the ED professionals are simply more likely to hire a school's students due to the impact the university has on the business community in general.

As only some of the predicted items appear to influence brand loyalty within the ED segment, and for those only on a limited basis as indicated by relatively low means, RQ 4 is not clearly addressed for this group of stakeholders.

#### Research Question 5

*RQ 5: In what manner does the perceived value of varying types of economic development activities in which the university engages differ among the three stakeholder segments?*

As with research questions two and four as described above, RQ 5 asks how the three segments will vary in their perception of the value different activities offer the local economic and business development community. The literature, as well as the codes revealed in the interviews, suggests that each of the three segments in the study will assign the greatest value to the HEI attributes or activities that most closely align with their interests and perceived benefits, as would consumers for most any more conventional product. For example, a buyer with small children may perceive the most important attribute of a Volvo to be its reputation for safety while a young driver with no children may prefer its reputation for status and as a sign of financial success. In the case of this investigation, this assessment will determine the brand image of the institution as perceived by the participant individually and collectively by the segment.

This is supported in the literature both for products generally and within the HEI domain. In the case of the former, Keller (2003) suggests that while some consumers will place a higher value on practical or tangible aspects of the brand others will place greater value on intangible or hedonic characteristics that lend status or prestige to the brand. Felix (2014) argues that not only may customers be loyal to more than one brand, but that the characteristics that determine their brand choices may vary between groups.

Specific to the research involving higher education, the literature also suggests that customer segments may value different HEI attributes. For example, Stephenson and Yerger (2014) found that alumni valued activities or attributes that impacted students and the prestige of the institution. Bowen (2013) suggests that universities need to find a “niche” that services the needs of a particular set of students (and presumably their

parents) while Trapp et al., (2014) found that the quality of the faculty, library and living amenities were all important factors to students. McAdam and Marlow (2008), Gordon and Jack (2010) and Ahmad and Ingle (2011) all found that local business and ED practitioners placed a high value on tangible activities such as incubators, business owner training, and professional networking. In a case study of a Ford Motor Company experiential education program, Aurand, Clair, and Sullivan (2012) found that the program helped the firm not only improve the marketing for their Focus product line but also helped develop a talent pool. The following discusses the findings of the first phase of the Delphi study for RQ 5 for each of the three segments in the study.

#### Alumni Segment Findings

As the alumni segment was more diverse than the other two segments, it would be reasonable to expect a widely varied perspective regarding the university's brand image and the related ED activities. However, even allowing for the diversity within the participants it is surprising that, given the interview responses, not only was there very little consensus on the university's brand image but that none of the predicted items proved to be important to the alumni segment with regard to image. In the interviews, the alumni were consistent in their interest in activities that raised the visibility of the institution and contributed to its reputation in the community. However, the survey findings did not identify any one item or group of items that support the interview outcomes. Two items were rated at a mean of 6.0, entrepreneurial education and small business development. Clearly, these items are related as both support the growth of small business. Thus, while RQ 5 is not supported for the predicted items, there is some

limited support for the alumni segment basing their perception of the brand image of the university on activities which raise the prestige and visibility of the institution in the community.

Based on the survey results, RQ 5 is minimally addressed for the predicted items within the alumni segment.

#### Employer Segment Findings

Drawing on the literature and the interview findings there is reason to expect that, within the employer segment, the brand image of the university would be most strongly impacted by those activities that benefit the institution's students and their preparation for entering the workforce. The interviews were consistent in this regard, and the survey results lend support to those findings. Of all the items in the survey, student consulting received the highest mean score (6.75) and a low standard deviation (.5). Workforce development (mean = 6.25) and entrepreneurial education (mean = 6.0), were both rated highly by the employer segment. However, although many of the participants noted the value of student volunteerism in the interviews it only received a mean rating of 5.5 from the employers, suggesting that while it is valued the activities directly related to skill acquisition are more important to this segment when evaluating brand image.

Consequently, RQ 5 for the employer segment is partially answered for the predicted items but largely addressed in the context of the value they place on those items relating to preparing students for the workforce.

## Economic Development Professionals Findings

Based on their responses in the interviews, the ED professionals placed the most value on those activities that directly impact local economic and business development when evaluating the brand image of the university and specific activities included in the survey were predicted to be of highest value to this segment.

Although incubators received high marks in the interviews as being a useful contribution to local ED and universities received credit for that contribution, they did not fare as well in the segment valuation with regard to building a positive brand image (mean = 5.2). Similarly, while faculty involvement in the ED community was a consistent theme in the interviews, it also failed to be of value to the institution's brand image in the view of the ED segment.

Of the activities predicted to be important to this segment, both entrepreneurial education (mean = 6.0) and small business development (mean = 6.2) were viewed positively by the ED segment in contributing to brand image. As with employers, student consulting was also viewed as a positive factor in the brand image of the university (mean = 6.2), and student volunteerism (mean = 5.8) was also viewed positively. This raises a potentially interesting finding in that, in the view of the ED professionals, those activities most closely associated with students were perceived as having a larger impact on brand image than those activities associated with faculty.

Based on the predicted activities RQ 5, for the ED professionals is largely answered and partial consensus was reached.

### Delphi Phase 1 Summary

The table below summarizes the research questions addressed in the first round of the Delphi study

Table 8  
*Delphi Phase 1 Summary*

Research Question	Answered & Consensus	Partially Answered & Consensus	Not answered
RQ 1	X		
RQ 2a		X	
RQ 2b	X		
RQ 2c		X	
RQ 3	X		
RQ 4 (alumni)			X
RQ 4 (employer)	X		
RQ 4 (ED)		X	
RQ 5 (alumni)			X
RQ 5 (employer)	X		
RQ 5 (ED)		X	

As noted in Chapter III, the primary objective of a Delphi study is to reach consensus among the expert participants (Day & Bobeva, 2005; Linstone & Turoff, 2002). In the case of this study, the participants rated the thirteen items in the survey very differently not only within segments but between them as well. In order to reach consensus, the number of items needed to be reduced to a manageable number that the participants could *rank* from most to least important, rather than rate on a Likert type scale. To accomplish this, the frequency that each item was rated with a mean of 6.0 or higher, within all questions and for all participants, was totaled as shown in Table 9.

Table 9  
*Rating Summary of Delphi Phase 1*

	Alumni	Employer	ED	Total
Internships	4	5	4	13
Pro-bono faculty consulting	1	1	4	6
Incubators		3	1	4
Student volunteerism	0	0	0	0
Faculty participation	3	4	3	10
Workforce development	2	4	4	10
Student consulting	1	3	2	6
Campus arts and culture	1	0	2	3
Entrepreneurial education	4	2	5	11
Small business development	4	2	5	11
Student/alumni interaction	1	0	1	2
Promoting/advertising the university	1	0	1	2
Leadership visibility/involvement	4	4	4	12
Segment totals	26	28	36	

The five highest, exclusive of the item regarding the university's leadership, were internships, faculty participation in local organizations, workforce development, entrepreneurial education and small business development. These five items formed the basis for the second round of the Delphi study.

### Delphi Round Two

While Delphi studies may run as many as 8-10 rounds, the more common methodology is that employed in this study, which leveraged the interviews to serve as the discovery phase followed by two rounds of surveys (Day & Bobeva, 2005). The second of these sought to reach a consensus between the expert participants and identify



the items (activities) that best answer the research questions. In the first survey, the participants were asked to rate each of the thirteen items on a 1 to 7 point Likert-type scale. In the second round, those thirteen items were reduced to five items, and the participants were asked to *rank*, rather than rate, each of them where a rank of five was most influential in determining brand image and loyalty and one was least influential.

Of the original sixteen respondents, thirteen answered the second survey. In a few isolated cases, not all the respondents ranked all five items in every category. In question one, the respondents were asked to rate the five items for their influence on brand image. In questions two and three they were asked to rank the influence of the five items on the influence the items had on their likelihood to hire the institution's students for internships or entry-level positions (Q2) and on how the items would influence their likelihood to select the institution for projects in their firms or organizations (Q3). As discussed previously, these two latter evaluations were used as proxies for brand loyalty as the participants in the study are unlikely to "buy" or patronize the university product in the manner typically associated with the concept. The results are discussed below. The five items included in the second survey are:

- Internships
- Faculty participation in local organizations
- Workforce development
- Entrepreneurial education
- Small business development

Table 10, below, summarizes the rankings as provided by the thirteen respondents in round two. Perhaps the most interesting outcome of this phase is that internships remained the most highly rated ED activity in determining the brand equity of the institution, closely followed by faculty involvement in the community. The implications of this are discussed in Chapter V.

Table 10  
*Delphi Round 2 Results*

Image	Rank (medians)
Interns	4.0
Workforce development	4.0
Faculty involvement	3.5
Entrepreneurial education	2.5
Small business development	2.0
Loyalty (Hire students))	
Interns	5.0
Faculty involvement	4.0
Workforce development	3.0
Entrepreneurial education	2.0
Small business development	1.0
Loyalty (Select for projects)	
Faculty involvement	4.5
Interns	3.5
Workforce development	3.5
Entrepreneurial education	3.0
Small business development	1.5

#### Propositions for future consideration

The literature, interviews codes and Delphi surveys revealed a number of themes, sub-themes and stories that address the research questions and perhaps suggest new

questions as well. The Delphi study also helped this research determine where the three segments were able to reach consensus regarding how business and economic development activities influence HEI branding and brand equity and where such consensus is lacking. The research also revealed some surprising findings regarding the value of students and faculty in the HEI branding process, which are discussed below in Chapter V.

Given these findings, and as an outcome of the study, this section offers a series of propositions, including some insights offered by the literature, that can serve as a foundation for future, large-sample quantitative studies that focus on a sharper domain or segment(s) and perhaps be used for hypothesis testing.

As noted earlier in this chapter, by its very nature this research assumes that the participants, as well as the stakeholders at large, are aware of the HEI as a brand. Brand awareness is important in the context of this research as the literature, and common sense, suggests that awareness is a necessary antecedent to other dimensions of brand equity, including those of interest in this investigation (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993, 2003; Rossiter, 2014). There is also general agreement in the literature that this awareness develops as result of the application of one or more parts of the marketing mix (Keller, 2003; Davcik et al., 2015; Rossiter, 2014). For example, Red Bull grew from near complete obscurity, in an equally obscure product category, to become a household name and category leader by applying a unique and unconventional blend of the marketing mix. While Red Bull has earned what is arguably the highest brand awareness in their category and has done so with very little in the way of conventional promotion, that recognition

has not evoked the same brand image among all consumers. While many Millennials associate the product with a party atmosphere and being a valued study aid, the product has received a far less positive response among older, more traditional consumers.

Just as customers will react differently to the ways in which firms employ the components of the marketing mix, including those related to promotion (Felix, 2012), we should expect that the HEI's stakeholders will react differently to the ED activities in which the institution engages (Chapelo, 2010; Elmuti et al., 2005; Stephenson & Yerger, 2014). This dynamic is supported in the literature, with most researchers finding that a firm's customer segments will not only perceive product attributes differently but that those customers will also assign differing values to those attributes (Felix, 2014; Payne et al., 2005). Returning to our Red Bull example, while students may perceive the party-sustaining boost the drink provides when mixed with vodka, most parents may view that product attribute far differently.

In their investigation of the relationships stakeholders have with products and brands Hult, Mena, Ferrell and Ferrell (2011) conclude that not all stakeholders will view firms, and products, in the same manner and that successful firms will adjust their marketing to adapt to the needs and perceptions of differing stakeholders. Davcik, Silva, and Hair (2015) support this perspective suggesting that brand equity relies, in part, on attributes relevant to individual stakeholders or groups of stakeholders. Thus, this research suggests the following proposition:

P1) There will be a positive relationship between the extent to which the participants favorably view the attributes of the ED activities in which the HEI engages

and the contribution those activities make to the brand equity of the HEI as perceived by the participant.

The literature regarding branding, and brand equity, is consistent in the expectation that customers will not only perceive product attributes differently but also assign a different value to those attributes (Felix, 2015; Keller, 1993, 2003; Payne et al., 2005). In the context of this research, this would suggest that the influence of the HEI's economic development activities on the brand equity of the institution will vary with the stakeholder segment as a result of the perceived attributes of the activity.

Drawing on Keller's (1993) perspective regarding how customers perceive the benefits they derive from product attributes, this research further proposes that how the ED activities are perceived and consequently influence brand equity, will be dependent on the nature of the activity. Keller (1993) identifies three types of product attributes, each of may be valued to greater or lesser degrees by the three segments of stakeholders:

Symbolic

Experiential

Functional

*Symbolic:* These benefits are the result of those activities, that while intangible and difficult to measure, result in raising the visibility and presence of the institution. Student and faculty/staff volunteerism, directly participating in local economic development committees or task forces and serving on charitable boards are examples. Stephenson and Yerger (2014) in their investigation into alumni reaction to HEI branding efforts found that alumni were more engaged, and perceived the HEI's brand more

positively when the brand created a sense of belonging and community. Further, they found that to reach alumni the branding practices of the institution should instill a message of distinction and attractiveness. This is consistent with branding for many products that rely on intangible benefits rather than utilitarian attributes, such as high fashion. As Keller (1993, 2003) notes, brands can be positively influenced by those promotional activities and product attributes that deliver little in the manner of concrete benefits, yet are very real to the customer. Thus, with regard to the alumni segment under study, it is proposed:

P2a) The brand equity of the institution, as perceived by the key alumni segment, will be more positively influenced by the symbolic ED activities related to university image and visibility than by other economic development activities

*Experiential:* This class of benefits might result from activities that provide new, or improved, capabilities or competencies, especially for students. Internships, student clubs such as the American Marketing Association and pitch competitions are examples. As discussed in Chapter 2, the focus of our industry as educators is knowledge. However, as noted by Blewitt (2010), knowledge is also what he describes as the business of business. The U.S., as well as other developed economies, is reliant on a highly-trained workforce for innovation and to remain competitive in a global business landscape increasingly dependent on skilled and well-educated workers. Many, if not most, firms view universities as a key source of new and well-educated talent (Sullivan, 2011).

In examining the value of entrepreneurship education Bridge, Hegarty and Porter (2010) identified the concept of “enterprise for life” as important to both students and

employers (p. 729). Multiple authors have found that alliances between HEI's and industry are vital for the development, acquisition, and transfer of knowledge between the partners, including that between students and the business community (Dealtry, 2008; Mansor & Abdullah, 2012). Dealtry (2008) suggests that such knowledge transfer may be among the receiving firm's most important assets. This research argues that this transfer is well served by experiential education for interns and entry-level employees and thus, with regard to the employer segment, proposes:

P2b) The brand equity of the institution, as perceived by the employer segment, will be more positively influenced by those activities directly involving experiential student activities than by other economic development activities.

*Functional:* These attributes might be characterized as resulting from those activities that are concrete, actionable and provide substantive benefits to the business or ED communities. Examples might include incubators, consulting and community-based research. While local business leaders may develop a more positive image of the HEI's brand as result of sports (Clark, Apostolopoulou, Branvold & Synowka, 2009) or value the university's charitable activities, this research argues that above all else, the business and ED community most value those activities that directly impact concrete financial or economic metrics such as jobs and tax revenues.

Bicknell et al. (2010) cite the value of knowledge transfer between the HEI and the local community, concluding that HEIs would benefit from 'communities of practice' (p. 497). Arguably one of the most functional ED practices to which HEIs can contribute, incubators have been found to be valued by the business community and that they

contribute to the networking and image of the institution (Ahmad & Ingle, 2011; McAdam & Marlow, 2008). Thus, with respect to the economic development practitioner's segment this research proposes:

P2c) The brand equity of the institution, as perceived by the economic development professionals segment, will be more positively influenced by the functional activities related to ED than by other activities.

While, as discussed in Chapter 2, the academic community has yet to reach a unified definition of brand image there is a consensus that the concept is an amalgam of perceptions the customer holds regarding the firm and its products. Typically, these perceptions would be influenced by a number of factors including the customer's experience with the product(s), their beliefs and attitudes and what benefits they receive, or believe they receive, from their interaction with the product(s) (Keller, 2003; Davcik et al., 2015; Danes et al., 2012). Often, these perceptions are built less on tangible outcomes of interacting with the product than they are in how the customer feels about that interaction (Keller, 2003; Magid, Cox & Cox, 2006). This paradigm may be particularly applicable in the case of the relationships between HEI's and the business community as the product attributes may be perceived very differently and be, at least in part, intangible and difficult to quantify.

For example, the leadership of a firm considering relocation visits a campus and sees not only a vibrant academic environment but also a pool of student talent that is valued by the firm. This may be a part of the decision process but is very difficult to quantify or document. Thus, the impact the ED activity of student internships has on



brand image may equally vary, and these perceptions may be far less grounded in measurable business metrics than they are in intangible benefits the firm values (Pashkus, Pashkus, Krasnikova & Asadulaev, 2015).

In the case of the HEI's "products" consider what many an internship faculty supervisor has experienced – the student may, in fact, be more work for the firm's manager overseeing them than the output the intern produces. Yet, firms not only welcome interns but in many cases compete for the "best of show," and the intern's performance may have a lasting impact on the institution's brand. Thus, this research proposes that the influence of the ED activities on brand image will align with the value the participant associates with that activity such that:

P3) There will be a relationship between the extent to which the participants value the ED activities in which the HEI engages and the extent to which those activities positively influence the brand image of the HEI as perceived by the participants.

Loyalty is a common theme throughout the branding literature in consumer (Danes, et al., 2010; Davcik et al., 2015) and business markets (Biedenbach, 2011), albeit to a lesser degree. However, as Chapelo (2010) notes, the literature has little to offer regarding higher education brand loyalty, with the notable exception of sports and the perspective of enrolled on-campus students (Clark, et al., 2009) Much of what exists tends to focus on what might be considered the traditional target segments of students (Nguyen, Xiaoyu, Melewar & Hemsley-Brown, 2016), parents and sports boosters (Clark et al., 2009) with little, if any of the literature, examining forces external to the HEI, such as employers and local business leaders (Joseph et al., 2012).

As noted above, loyalty is often viewed through one of two lenses. First, that of habitual buying behavior with little attention paid to why the purchase is made (Che & Seethraaman, 2009). This research rejects that perspective as none of the three segments involved is prone to that habitual behavior. Each, even the alumni, are in one manner or another business professionals and thus employ more thoughtful and complex buying behaviors (Mudambi et al., 1997). Rather, this research argues for the lens described by Felix (2014) and Dick and Basu (1994) which suggests that loyalty is multi-dimensional, placing more emphasis on deeply held beliefs or attitudes. As noted in Proposition 2 above, this research argues that the influence on perceived brand equity, including the dimension of brand loyalty, will vary within the three segments under investigation as a result of differing beliefs or attitudes regarding the ED activities.

*Alumni segment:* Practical experience, as well the extant literature, support the notion that alumni are particularly interested in those promotional, branding and academic activities that support the reputation or standing of the institution (Higgins, 2017). A positive reputation and building a sense of community both within the institution and externally, supported by promotional and branding practices, have been found to be attractive to alumni (Frasquet, Calderon & Cervera, 2012; Stephenson & Yerger, 2014). This researcher has found, in the course of participation with alumni in community projects, that they prefer those that support the image of the university, most notably the school's core values or the success of other alumni. Thus, this research proposes:

P4a). The brand loyalty of the alumni segment will be most influenced by those activities the alumni participants perceive as positively influencing the status of the institution

As the U. S., along with many other developed countries, become increasingly reliant on a knowledge-based economy, the competition for highly skilled and educated talent is increasing as well, and firms look to HEI's to be a primary source for those employees. As noted by Asebedo and Asebedo (2013) two of the most critical functions for corporate HR departments are staffing and employee development, going on to suggest that HEI's have a crucial role in these processes through what they term the Practitioner University. In discussing the emerging role of knowledge transfer within academia Bicknell, Francis-Smythe and Arthur (2010) note that one benefit of the transfer is improved connectivity with industry. This research argues that an important part of the branding benefits HEIs derive from economic development activities are those that involve students engaging with local firms as interns or entry-level employees, and thus proposes:

P4b) The brand loyalty of the employer segment will be most influenced by those activities they perceive as directly supporting student development.

The most common benchmarks for success within the economic development industry are tax base growth, jobs, commercial property occupancy rates and residential housing starts. To achieve these objectives economic development, on a micro localized basis, most often employs one of two avenues. First, the ED professionals assist new firms launching in their community or they "sell" existing firms to relocate to, or expand

in, the ED practitioner's service area. Second, those working in ED assist existing firms, typically younger and smaller ones, to grow and expand in the community. In both cases, HEIs can play a substantive role. For example, incubators can assist firms in both the launch and growth phases of development and HEIs are generally recognized as major contributors to those facilities (McAdam & Marlow, 2008). Firms seeking relocation or expansion commonly look for specific traits that make an area attractive, including access to skilled labor, good public schools and quality of life for its executives. Typically, HEIs have attributes and capabilities that allow them to contribute to these traits. Thus, this research proposes:

P4c) The brand loyalty of the economic development professional segment will be most influenced by those activities the ED participants perceive as positively benefitting the local business community.

Much as discussed in Proposition 2 regarding the manner in which the three segments under study will perceive brand equity differently at the holistic level, this research also argues that at a more granular level the participants will assign differing values to specific activities and groups of activities. This is consistent with what we might expect from customers for most products in both B2C (Aaker, 1996; Anisimova, 2014) and B2B products (Mudambi, 2002). In the case of the former, Starbucks has built a following based on high quality coffee, but many of their patrons equally value the "homey" setting and reliable net access. In the case of the latter, as noted by Gomes et al., (2016), B2B buyers place a value on price but also consider service and technology as important attributes.

In the HEI domain, the value placed on product attributes and characteristics, and the perceived benefits that derive from those qualities are expected to vary, perhaps considerably so (Waerass & Solbakk, 2009; Chapelo, 2010) both internally within the institution and externally among the segments of interest in this study. Thus, the final propositions are:

P5a) The alumni segment will most value those ED activities that they perceive as positively influencing the reputation of the institution

P5b) The employer segment will most value those ED activities that they perceive as directly benefitting students.

P5c) The economic development professional segment will most value those ED activities that they perceive as positively benefitting the local community.

## CHAPTER V

### Conclusions and Implications

This final chapter of the study seeks to accomplish four objectives. First, to summarize the results of the study and address the implications of both the research questions and the results of the Delphi study. Second, to discuss the limitations of the study. Third, suggest opportunities for future research. Finally, address some managerial considerations.

#### Review of the Study

This was a mixed methods study conducted in two phases. In phase one, semi-structured interviews were conducted with sixteen individuals representing three types of stakeholders in the higher education environment: economic development experts, alumni, and key employers. This qualitative method was selected for three reasons. First, the existing literature addressing branding in the higher education domain is slight and inadequate to form a suitable quantitative questionnaire (Helmsley-Brown et al., 2016). Second, on a related note, the research anticipated finding themes relevant to the domain that were minimally, if at all, addressed in the literature. The interview methodology is useful for revealing these unexpected themes (Creswell, 2013). Third, as only one of the three segments (alumni) is of any appreciable size, finding an adequate pool of participants was unlikely.

The primary objective of the study was to determine if the activities in which higher education institutions engage in support of local economic and business development have any impact on the brand equity of the university as perceived by members of the three stakeholder groups. It is generally recognized that universities are active in economic and business development in a variety of ways (Blewitt, 2010). What is far less acknowledged is what, if any, impact these activities have on the institution's brand equity, specifically the dimensions of brand image and brand loyalty. Thus, the principal research objectives were to determine if the university's investment in ED activities in their local community have any impact on brand equity and further, to determine if there are differences in the perceptions of three groups of stakeholders crucial to the institution's mission.

The resulting primary research question is:

*In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to the brand equity of the institution as perceived by differing stakeholder segments?*

#### Study One Findings and Implications

The interviews resulted in two outcomes useful to the study. First, they revealed four themes and a selection of sub-themes that address the research questions. Second, they helped to identify a list of activities that were used to address the research questions employing the Delphi-based Study Two.

### Theme One: Function

The study found that this was the most prevalent theme and the one that most strongly supported the idea that ED activities are influential in determining brand equity. The function theme activities are those that are, as the name suggests, overt, practical and tangible. Finding this to be the dominant theme comes as little surprise given both the practical experience of this researcher and a review of the literature. In a study commissioned by AACSB, Sullivan (2011) discusses the vital role of universities in workforce development and that universities should be paying greater attention to preparing students for entry into the business community. He also notes that most institutions do this poorly. Bicknell, Francis-Smythe and Arthur (2010) discuss the importance of transferring knowledge from universities to business, but again note that this is not always successful. Reflecting on the past five years of work in the community that forms the basis for this investigation, it has been this researcher's experience that these tangible activities were those most often noted as useful and appreciated by business leaders in the local community.

The interviews support the importance of these types of ED activities. Of the five highest ranked activities, four are, to greater or lesser degrees, examples of the function theme: internships, workforce development, entrepreneurial education and small business development. Of these, internships are ranked the highest in the Delphi study as being important to the university's image. The only factor that was similarly ranked was the presence of the university's leadership in the community, however this was not a consistent interview issue in the function theme. These findings suggest an interesting



implication for branding theory. As noted in virtually all branding research, brand equity is the result of some application of the marketing mix (Davcik et al., 2015; Kotler, 1993, 2003) most often promotion in one form or another. This raises the question of the role of both students, specifically those serving in internships, and the university leadership in branding the institution and if they are an extension of promotion or marketing communication similar to brand ambassadors or evangelists.

The function theme, and these specific activities, have serious practical implications for universities. If indeed these comparatively inexpensive and easy to implement functions are as important as this study suggests, then the considerable funds expended in other more expensive branding, such as the stereotypical “university development” office, may be better spent elsewhere. Internships and involving faculty in local business affairs is not only easy and inexpensive but also has academic and professional development implications beyond the branding that is the focus of the study. In a similar Delphi study focused on the marketing of higher education, Hayes (2006) notes that at the university he studied, there were no additional funds for (marketing) integration (p. 930) and that the marketing in question needed to be accomplished within existing budgets. Those of us working in higher education recognize that for most universities little has changed – marketing and branding dollars are limited. In what may be something of a shock to university presidents and their senior staffs, this theme suggests, albeit on a very limited scale, that students may have a greater influence on the institution’s brand than they do – and there are far more of them. Similarly, the theme suggests that deploying faculty, especially those in business schools, can have a

significant influence on how the institution is perceived. As most faculty contracts have a “service” requirement universities might consider fewer committees and more community interaction. Universities may wish to explore both students and faculty as branding tools that help maximize limited budgets.

#### Theme Two: Integration

This theme is characterized by the cliché that universities should get out of their ivory tower, or as one participant described it, “getting beyond the walls”. The integration theme incorporates concepts of community and the extension of those inside the university, such as students and faculty, to the external university environment. Integration might be manifested by the faculty becoming involved in local business and networking organizations and students providing consulting, volunteerism and internships. Viewed as a broader concept, this theme is comparable to charitable or corporate social activities that firms might engage in to bolster their brand image. One participant noted that while the student he was observing did not know which end of the hammer to hold while helping repair a fence at a local women’s refuge, the impression he made on several business leaders who were participating in the project contributed to the positive image of the institution.

Both the internships and faculty involvement characteristic of this theme is also indicative of the interconnectedness of the four themes, a concept consistent with previous research in thematic analysis (Soldana, 2013). A given activity, internships for example, may have an influence on more than one branding theme. In this case, both Function and Integration are positively influenced by that student with a hammer. Again,

drawing an analogy to corporate charitable activities, the grocery store chain that sponsors a charitable race may not only impact their brand image, but the runners have the store on top of mind when they shop for dinner on the way home. Those business leaders amused at the student's ineptitude with a hammer are also apt to remember his work ethic and community focus when they recruit their next intern or consider their next donation to the school's scholarship fund, thus not only enhancing the brand equity of the school but also providing tangible financial and academic outcomes. Thus, the integration theme raises some interesting theoretical extensions into prior research regarding the impact organizational charitable activities have on firm branding; an area barely explored in the HEI domain literature.

Despite this lack of attention in the literature, the integration theme is consistent with the limited existing research in HEI branding. Trapp et al., (2010) discuss the importance of the branding environment of which the institution is a part, and that interaction within the university's broader community is an important part of supporting a brand image. Lynch and Owen (2011) argue that community interaction supports not only positive associations for the institution but superior academic and employment outcomes for students. Thus, the findings relevant to this theme have implications for both future academic exploration and for our practitioner colleagues

Integration has potential consequences, both positive and negative, for HEI marketers. As noted above in discussing the function theme, students and faculty are both readily accessible and affordable "marketing communication channels" in a domain in which many traditional channels have proven largely ineffective (Chapelo, 2010). It is

noteworthy that in the Delphi surveys, advertising the university was rated at the bottom of activities that influenced brand image and loyalty. Thus, those tasked with promoting HEIs may have an untapped wealth of branding power available no further away than the dorms. Conversely, failing to exploit this branding tool may well reinforce the idea that HEIs live behind their ivory walls, an outcome unfavorable to marketing and branding the institution. As noted in the AACSB study by Sullivan (2011), universities need to reach beyond their campuses, but few seem to be doing so particularly well.

### Theme Three: Presence

This theme was particularly intriguing as it is very nearly absent in the literature. Cook, Campbell, and Kopp (2013) discuss the importance of engagement and commitment in their investigation of universities involvement with small business development. O'Connor, Lynch, and Owens (2011) argue that successful HEI's are those that are better at becoming active and collaborative members of their communities. However, neither of these fully capture the spirit of this theme. One participant described this theme as the necessity for the university to become part of the "fabric" of the community, going on to note that the university is "not an island". The presence theme is best described as the notion that simply by being there, the institution enhances the community absent of any concrete activity specific to economic development. While this theme was less prevalent than those discussed above, it nonetheless raises some interesting branding implications. Consider what one alumni respondent noted about the presence of a university in the area: *"If you are going to attract companies or industries into an area, one of the first things they're going to ask is about the educational*

*system...successful graduates of those universities have a big impact on economic development”.*

While this respondent was not dismissive of the overt actions the university took in support of the business community, he advocated for the notion that just by being there the university played an important role. While not as well developed as other themes, this is an interesting idea that merits further investigation as it does have implications for HEI marketers. If indeed the presence of the school, in and of itself, is of value to economic development, then the university has a promotion and branding message that is not only unique, but costs little to exploit as the value proposition is already in place.

#### Theme Four: Promotion

This theme is particularly interesting in light of the Delphi findings that advertising the university was ranked at, or near, the bottom of important branding attributes. Yet, both the interview findings and the preponderance of the literature place a high value on promoting the university specifically and brands generally. In the case of the former, one participant noted that by aligning themselves with economic development groups the university receives free advertising. Another, a member of the alumni segment, emphasized the importance of developing stories regarding successful economic and business outcomes, saying “*Stories are now the game changer, and people are growing towards that.*”

Turning to the literature, we might expect that advertising and promotion would be a key element in building a university brand. Any number of researchers, including Keller (1993, 2003), Davcik and his fellow authors (2015) and Baxendale et al., (2015)

support the theory that brand equity derives largely from promotion as part of the marketing mix. Yet, despite several of the participants providing interview codes that suggest they place a high value on promoting the institution, when asked to quantify that in the Delphi interviews the practice received poor marks as a contributing element in brand equity.

One possible explanation for this dichotomy is that in the minds of these stakeholders, all non-marketers, promotion is primarily traditional advertising activities which they view as ineffective as promoting the university's brand. Rather, they look at this through the lens of non-standard promotional activities as typified by one of the ED participants who noted that some activities, like hosting the symphony, simply give the HEI a certain "cache". Another, also in the ED segment, noted the pride with which he viewed the university when he saw them placing students in local businesses and ED organizations (i.e., the chamber of commerce and a local incubator) and the influence this had on how the business community viewed the institution. This suggests that an important finding of this study is that traditional advertising and promotional activities are a poor source of HEI branding and that non-traditional methods, including activities supporting local economic and business development, may be far better tools for HEI marketers to employ when building brand equity. This has implications for both academics and practitioners. For the former, additional research is needed to determine how non-traditional and unconventional promotion impacts the branding of not only HEIs but also similar not-for-profit institutions serving the greater community good. In assisting our colleagues in the marketing and communications departments in our

institutions, this research suggests that the way in which many schools invest their marketing dollars warrants reconsideration.

Thus, returning to the primary research question: *In what manner do the economic development activities in which the university engages contribute to the brand equity of the institution as perceived by differing stakeholder segments?*, the research findings support a conclusion that these activities do indeed, in the perception of all three segments under investigation, support increased positive brand equity.

The key issue in the remaining research questions is less whether or not these activities do indeed influence the brand equity of the university, but if that influence varies among the three stakeholder groups of interest. These issues are addressed in the findings of the Delphi study, as follows.

#### Study Two Findings and Implications

In the second phase of this research, a Delphi study was employed to further clarify the research questions and to attempt consensus on the part of the participants. The purpose of the Delphi was twofold, First, to quantify the extent to which a list of economic development activities impacted brand equity as perceived by the participants. Second, to determine how those perceptions varied between the three segments. As a result of the interviews in the initial study, thirteen factors were identified that are contributory factors in HEI brand equity. Based on the interviews and this investigator's knowledge of economic development in the HEI domain, the activities were assigned to the three groups as discussed in Chapter IV. These groupings suggest that alumni will most closely associate with those factors relating to the university's visibility and

reputation; that employers will most closely associate with those factors that directly impact students and their preparation for entering the workforce; that ED professionals will most favor those factors that best support local business and economic development. In a small number of cases, there is some overlap in the factors between the three groups.

In the first round Delphi survey, the participants were asked to rate their perception of the contribution each of the items made to brand image and loyalty. In the second round, the list was narrowed from 13 items to five and rather than being rated, the participants were asked to rank the items, from most to least influential in their perception of brand image and loyalty. As is common in Delphi studies the second, and final, survey in this research was intended to seek consensus among the expert participants (Day & Bobeva, 2005). The five items included in the second survey are:

Internships

Faculty participation in local organizations

Workforce development

Entrepreneurial education

Small business development

As proposed, the results of the Delphi study confirm that the more highly the participants rate the activity regarding its impact on local economic development, the more highly they rated the influence that activity has on the perceived brand equity of the university. Thus, in addressing research questions one and three, the study supports that economic development activities have a significant influence on the perceived brand equity of the institution and specifically on the dimension of brand image.



This was consistent for the majority of the activities included in the study. However, it is interesting that some that might be considered complimentary yielded very different results, especially those related to related to students and their activities in the business community. As noted above, the interviews strongly supported student activities, a finding consistent across all three segments. In many cases, the participants not only responded positively to questions regarding student contributions to local business and economic well-being, but many also had very specific stories to support their perception of student-centric activities. However, unlike the interviews, the Delphi study revealed that while internships and workforce development both received very positive ratings from the participants and student volunteerism was also rated well, but to a lesser degree, student consulting projects and their interaction with alumni both received much lower ratings. The Wilcoxon analysis also supported strong links between the positive perception of student activities and the participants' perception of the brand image of the school but little support for interaction between alumni and students. Nothing in the interviews account for this, and this may be fruitful ground for future investigation.

The study also revealed that the participants, in toto, viewed those activities that had a strong and concrete link to the business community as having a positive impact on the brand image of the institution. Small business development, faculty consulting and entrepreneurial education all received high marks in the surveys and the Wilcoxon analysis demonstrates the link between these tangible activities and a favorable view of the institution.

This evaluation of student and faculty-centric activities remained consistent in the second round of the Delphi. While there was some divergence of opinion, as might be expected from three diverse segments, overall internships and faculty consulting had the most influence on perceived brand image.

In a somewhat counter-intuitive finding, alumni showed very little evidence of being brand loyal as a result of any of the activities in question, including interaction with students. Although some previous research has found alumni to be valuable to HEI branding (Stephenson & Yerger, 2014), other research has found alumni relations to be of minimal value in developing brand equity (Mourad et al., 2010). Given the potential value of this group for employment and donations, this finding may warrant additional investigation.

The study also aimed to determine if brand loyalty was impacted by the ED activities in which the HEI engaged and further, how loyalty differed among the three groups. Unlike brand image, which the study suggests is linked to the activities included in the research, there is far less evidence that those activities result in brand loyalty. While the evidence supporting brand loyalty for the ED professionals segment is somewhat stronger, it is also less than expected and proposed. Not surprisingly, small business development and entrepreneurial education both are rated highly by the ED segment in their likelihood to be brand loyal to the institution. The surprising finding is that incubators, a mainstay of HEI business support and development, received far lower marks. The strongest links between brand loyalty and the ED activities of interest was among the employer group. This segment showed a strong link between proxies used for

brand loyalty and the predicted activities, especially internships, student consulting and education. As proposed, employers are more likely to hire the students of the university as opposed to those of the competition and to select the students for projects in their firms if the HEI engages in specific ED related activities. As with the results for brand image, the second Delphi round also found that student and faculty activities have the strongest influence on brand loyalty.

Interestingly, promoting the university did not receive particularly high ratings in the Delphi study, although in the interviews it did emerge as a theme. As this represents something of a contradiction in the findings, and that there is evidence in the literature to support the importance of HEI communications and promotion (Hayes, 2007; Melewar & Akeel, 2005) the question of how IMC influences brand equity in the domain may warrant future research. An extension of this research might explore the necessity for what Helmsley-Brown and Goonawardana (2007) term “brand harmonization” or reaching a common brand for the entire institution as opposed to individual schools or programs. While this research framed some its questions in such a manner as to include the university as a whole, given the subject matter and participants it is clearly most relevant to the business school and therefore future research might explore branding across the entire institution as a result of community programs and outreach.

Considered collectively, these findings have implications for university administrators, especially those in marketing and fundraising capacities. As with the findings from the interviews, these results suggest that traditional advertising and promotion (beyond that associated with sports) have little impact on brand equity,

especially the dimension of brand image. As noted previously, this may be attributable to how the participants view the idea of promotion – to them the concept may be more centered on traditional advertising channels and methods. These results suggest that universities may wish to reconsider the common use of traditional promotion in the pursuit of branding and fundraising and instead consider alternative options that bring them in closer contact with the ED and business communities.

As with the interviews, the Delphi study suggests that more effective methods may be those that are both non-traditional and, fortunately for the institution's budget, less expensive. While the study is admittedly small in scope, it does suggest that those assets the university has in abundance, namely faculty and students, may be both cost-effective and yield positive results in branding the institution. While linking a positive brand image and HEI loyalty to fundraising was not in the scope of this study, brand image in other domains, such as consumer goods, often results in improved sales and market share. Universities may wish to consider additional investments in student-centric activities linked to local ED, such as internships and community projects, to promote the school's image. These have the supplemental effect of enhancing positive educational outcomes and promoting employment.

#### Limitations of the Study and Opportunities for Future Investigations

The findings discussed above should be considered in the context of several limitations.

First, the research is comparatively limited in scope. While small sample sizes are common in both qualitative and Delphi studies, the sixteen participants represent a very

small cross-section of the three segments involved in the study. The limited sample may influence how academic researchers apply the results to future research and the manner in which university marketing practitioners employ the results in their branding and communications strategies. Having established a limited basis for developing a quantitative instrument, future studies in this domain may wish to expand the size of the sample.

Second, although the participants were asked to consider their responses, in both the interviews and Delphi study, in light of all universities or respond as if considering a generic university, all the participants have a relationship with [School 1], the home school (and employer) of this researcher. Consequently, some bias in their responses is inevitable and the findings may be skewed towards their perception of this school and not necessarily applicable to other schools with different business models, academics and sports programs.

Third, many of the participants are well-known to this researcher. While they were instructed to answer openly and honestly and confidentiality was promised, it is possible that these relationships influenced the answers received in the interviews. Future efforts furthering this research may address this issue by confining the interviews to those with which the researcher has no existing relationship.

Fourth, many of the participants live and work in close proximity to [School 1] which is located in a semi-rural, traditional and conservative southern community. Consequently, the study may have limited applicability to an urban university in a larger, more progressive community.

Fifth, [School 1] is a small, private Catholic university with traditional values and is very close-knit, both within itself and in its relationships with stakeholders. While this enhanced the applicability of this study to the hundreds of smaller universities with similar environments, the findings may have limited applicability to larger, secular HEIs. Future research may wish to address this limitation by extending the research to one or more large, state-sponsored universities.

Sixth, as with many qualitative research projects in which the researcher has both a knowledge of the domain and research environment and has some expertise in the subject matter, the likelihood for some level of bias is higher than might be the case in a purely quantitative study in which there is minimal, if any, familiarity with the participants and their environment. In the case of this research, the investigator is very familiar with the universities in question, the communities and some of the participants. He also possesses several years of experience in business and is an active participant, albeit largely on a pro-bono basis, in local economic development. Academic researchers may wish to consider this potential for bias in evaluating the results of the study.

Finally, as the limitations noted above as well as the dearth of extant research in the domain did not provide a foundation for determining the interview questions nor the items included in the Delphi, this investigation may well have missed factors that should be included as possible influences in determining brand equity. Future research opportunities might explore these by expanding into other geographies, expanding the interview pool and considering other stakeholders.

### Contributions and Closing Considerations

Despite higher education's vital role in society and the global economy, not to mention our own well-being as members of the industry, the existing research on how universities arrive at their brand image, outside of sports, is very limited. Within the profession, we may recognize that this school is particularly gifted in marketing research or that in economics. However, outside of our internal scholarly evaluation, there is little in the literature to guide us as academic researchers or to direct our practitioner colleagues regarding how to build a brand or engender brand loyalty among our various stakeholders. The literature offers far more on how to market soap and fast food than it does the academic lifeblood of an industrialized global economy. This research offers a very preliminary insight into future academic research regarding HEI branding and marketing. As noted, the findings, albeit limited in the ways enumerated above, suggest that there is room for future academic research seeking to extend the study and it is hoped that the findings presented in this work may hasten those efforts.

This work may also help practitioners in the industry become more effective at building brands and brand loyalty. As suggested above, marketers in our HEIs may be using not only the wrong tools but also missing opportunities to leverage assets sitting in their own classrooms and offices. This research subscribes to the conclusion reached by Helmsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) that university marketing is not a concept foreign to the domain that has been imported from the corporate world and that we, as an industry, have much to learn and do. Given the trend towards reduced enrollments and shrinking public budgets, we might expect university marketing budgets to shrink as well. This

work may offer marketing and fundraising staffs insights into how to best use affordable existing resources in this challenging environment.

It is hoped that this research also provides our most important asset, our students, with increased opportunities in experiential business education. As the findings suggest, they may be our best branding tool and it is hoped that not only do our higher education leaders use this research to employ them as our brand evangelists and advocates, but also to provide our institutional leaders with affordable and creative methods to build a better student.



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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

To: John Lax

From: Bahaudin Mujtaba,  
Center Representative, Institutional Review Board

Date: March 24, 2017

Re: IRB #: 2017-219; Title, "The Impact of Local Economic Development Activities on Perceived Brand Equity In The Higher Education Sector – An Examination of Three Stakeholder Segments."

I have reviewed the above-referenced research protocol at the center level. Based on the information provided, I have determined that this study is exempt from further IRB review under 45 CFR 46.101(b) (Exempt Category 2). You may proceed with your study as described to the IRB. As principal investigator, you must adhere to the following requirements:

1) **CONSENT:** If recruitment procedures include consent forms, they must be obtained in such a manner that they are clearly understood by the subjects and the process affords subjects the opportunity to ask questions, obtain detailed answers from those directly involved in the research, and have sufficient time to consider their participation after they have been provided this information. The subjects must be given a copy of the signed consent document, and a copy must be placed in a secure file separate from de-identified participant information. Record of informed consent must be retained for a minimum of three years from the conclusion of the study.

2) **ADVERSE EVENTS/UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS:** The principal investigator is required to notify the IRB chair and me (954-262-5369 and Bahaudin Mujtaba, respectively) of any adverse reactions or unanticipated events that may develop as a result of this study. Reactions or events may include, but are not limited to, injury, depression as a result of participation in the study, life-threatening situation, death, or loss of confidentiality/anonymity of subject. Approval may be withdrawn if the problem is serious.

3) **AMENDMENTS:** Any changes in the study (e.g., procedures, number or types of subjects, consent forms, investigators, etc.) must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Please be advised that changes in a study may require further review depending on the nature of the change. Please contact me with any questions regarding amendments or changes to your study.

The NSU IRB is in compliance with the requirements for the protection of human subjects prescribed in Part 46 of Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46) revised June 18, 1991.

Cc: Ramdas Chandra, Ph.D.; Michael Bendixen

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**CONSENT FORM: INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

**Investigator:** John Lax  
352-588-8191  
john.lax@saintleo.edu

**Title of Study:** The Impact of Local Economic Development Activities on Perceived Brand Equity In The Higher Education Sector – An Examination of Three Stakeholder Segments.

**Purpose of Study:** You are being asked to participate in a research study designed to investigate higher education branding

**Procedures:** You will be asked to participate in an interview approximately one (1) hour in length and complete a brief online survey (approximately 5-7 questions)

**Benefits:** None

**Risks:** None greater than those of daily life

**Costs/incentives:** None

**Confidentiality:** Your name will not be used in the dissertation. You will be identified with a code name (such as E1, for Employer 1). Your profile will be described (approximate age, gender, education and professional experience)

**Use of information:** Dissertation for DBA

**Voluntary** The participants may withdraw from the study at any time, or decline to participate, without any penalty.

**Signature:** The investigator has discussed the project with me and answered all my questions. I understand that additional questions regarding the study, participant rights, or other concerns, should be directed to Dr. Ramdas Chandra, Nova Southeastern University; email: cramdas@nova.edu. I agree with the terms above and acknowledge that I have been given a copy of the consent form. By signing this consent form, I agree to participate in this research project.

---

Signature of the Participant Date

---

Signature of Investigator Date

---

Signature of Reader/Translator Date



APPENDIX C

INFORMAL (INITIAL) EMAIL REQUESTS TO PARTICIPANTS

Hi \_\_\_\_\_,

I hope this finds you well and \_\_\_\_\_

It has been a long time coming but I have finally reached the data gathering stage of my dissertation. My topic is the relationship between local economic/community development and universities and I am relying on gathering data from a variety of stakeholders in the [School 1] community. My hope is that you will be willing to serve as a participant. The time requirement is minimal and your help will be greatly appreciated.

The initial phase is informal interviews with experts like yourself. In your case, I am asking that you participate from the perspective of <INSERT SEGMENT TYPE>, as you have <INSERT QUALIFICATION STATEMENT>. This interview will be about one hour in length and held at a location of your choice (your office, on campus or a third option of your choice). If an in-person interview is impractical we can use electronic means such as Skype or FaceTime.

Following the interview, in about 3-4 weeks you will receive a brief survey consisting of about 7-10 questions. These will be “click to answer” format and will take no more than a few minutes. There will be an open response space if you want to provide notes or comments. Finally, about two to three weeks after that survey you will receive a shorter survey consisting of few questions that allows me to clarify some details. This final survey will take no more than a few minutes.

Your answers will form the basis for my analysis, however none of them will be attributed to you personally and you will remain anonymous in the written dissertation and any subsequent publications.

I understand that your schedule is full, but I hope that you can make time for my research. If you are willing to participate, please reply with a brief email. I will then send you a more formal request, a copy of the consent form and a link to a scheduling tool. Please note that I will be out of the country from late June through July 14 and may not promptly reply to any emails during my travels. I hope to conduct the interviews the last two weeks of July.

I cannot thank you enough for your help and look forward to hearing back from you.

Regards,

John

APPENDIX D

FORMAL EMAIL REQUEST TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear <INSERT NAME>,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my dissertation research. Without your support and that of others in the local business community my research would not be possible and your help is greatly appreciated. The topic of the dissertation is the relationships between economic (community) development and higher education. Your role as an active member of the [School 1] community will play a vital part in addressing my research questions.

The interview will last approximately one hour plus a few minutes at the beginning to explain the process and protocols. The interview will be recorded and then transcribed. In the printed dissertation, as well as in subsequent papers or presentations, you will be described (basic demographics and professional profile) but you, and all others in the study, will remain anonymous. Of course, your participation is entirely voluntary.

Subsequent to the interviews, you will receive two surveys approximately 2-4 weeks apart. Both will be brief and setup on a simple scale format. Neither of these will take you more than a few minutes to complete. The survey will include space for comments or notes and you are encouraged to share your thoughts.

To simplify the scheduling process, I have setup an online application called Doodle. I have listed several dates with morning and afternoon times. Please select the one that is most convenient for you. When making your selection, please take a moment and ensure that another participant has not already selected that day and time. In the event that travel time or unforeseen schedule conflicts prohibit me from keeping the day and time you have selected, I may contact you via email to make changes. Doodle will send me an automated email when you select a time so it is not necessary for you to do so, although you are more than welcome to contact me via phone at 813-924-6383 or by email at [john.lax@saintleo.edu](mailto:john.lax@saintleo.edu). To use the scheduling poll, click on the link below and select your preferred time. Then scroll to the far RIGHT and click "Save". Your selection will be recorded and I will receive an email. Should the link not work from this email, please copy and paste it into your browser.

The Doodle link is:

<http://doodle.com/poll/gcw2xqkgddfa5df>

Attach is a copy of the standard consent form I will be using. Please review it and contact me with any questions. I will also bring a copy with me to the interview for you to sign, thus it is NOT necessary for you to return it me via email.

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for helping me in this endeavor and best regards,

John Lax

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Opening:

Good morning/afternoon (name) and thanks for helping me with my research. Our discussion today will take about five minutes for me to explain the research and interview process and to review the Consent Document I sent you in advance. The interview itself should take about an hour, however please feel free to provide as much detail as you think it takes to answer the questions – my morning/afternoon is yours.

This research project is attempting to learn two things. First, how effective are the community, business and economic development activities in which universities engage at promoting and supporting business growth and economic development in their communities? What I mean by that is if a university provides a service to the local business community – say an incubator, business plan competitions, consulting or interns how effective are they at doing so. What difference does it make in the local business community?

The research takes a broad view of what these activities might be. I'll ask you about some specific types of activities such as incubators, interns, community involvement and student projects but feel free to expand on those and offer your own suggestions.

The second thing I hope to learn is how those activities influence you and other people in the way in which you perceive the university. What impact do the activities have on the image of the university in the community?

These questions are intended to be broad in nature so feel free to share your thoughts even if your ideas are not directly related to the question I ask. If we get too far off track, I'll get us refocused. In some cases, we'll come back to a topic or subtopic more than once so that we can explore the idea in more detail and I am clear on your thoughts.

I am recording the interviews and the recordings will be transcribed and analyzed. In the dissertation, and any subsequent publications or presentations, you will be anonymously described but not identified by name. I have a consent form for you to sign that acknowledges that you are participating in the study of your own free will and understand that there is no remuneration or other personal tangible benefit for your participation.

In many of the questions I will be asking you about universities in general or all universities in the Tampa Bay area, not necessarily [School 1] specifically. If you are living away from the Bay area feel free to answer the questions in the context of your local universities. In some questions, I will specifically ask about [School 1] University. If I am not clear on which I am asking about, please let me know.

Any questions before we start?

## READY? LET'S GET STARTED

Q1: Assume that a business savvy colleague were to ask you to describe the impact that universities in general, not [SCHOOL 1] specifically (we'll get to that in a bit), make on our (your) community's local economic development and business growth, what would you tell them? Tell me what that conversation might include.

Q1A: As a follow up to that, let's assume you are still chatting with that colleague, what things that universities do would you tell him/her are of particular importance to local economic development and the business community?

1B: Follow up: You mentioned <insert topic> that you think is important. Tell me more about that.

1C: Are there specific examples that come to mind?

1D: Let's assume you were having a similar conversation with a startup firm just locating or launching here in the (your) community. How would you describe the benefits of having a university in the community to that firm's leaders?

1E: Let's assume you were having a similar conversation with an employer here in the community. How would you describe the benefits of having a university in the community?

RQ1/RQ2/RQ3

P1/P2 A-C

Thinking about your answers so far are there SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES that universities engage in that are important to economic / business / community development

Q2. We hear a lot about innovation in the media today. Tell me about how you see the influence universities have in promoting innovation in their local business communities.

Follow up: Open probes about specific stakeholders i.e. - ED pros, employers

RQ1/RQ3

P2A - C

Q3: Moving from universities in general to School One specifically, what impact does [SCHOOL 1] have on local business or economic development?

3A: In follow up to that, what specific activities or services that School 1 provides the local business community are important?

Follow up: Are some more important than others? Why/how?

RQ2

P1/P5

Q4. One of the things that we are interested in learning in this research is how the activities in which universities engage influence their image in the community.

4A: Let's start with a broad perspective. Thinking of all the things universities do to help the local business community, how do you think those activities influence the overall community's image of the university? Tell me about how you think those activities influence the way in which the average citizen, Joe and Jane Taxpayer, perceive universities in general – we'll get back to School 1 in a minute

4B: Getting a bit more specific, how do those things influence the way the business community, especially those in economic or community development, see their local universities?

4C: To be just a bit more specific how about entrepreneurs or small business owners? Is their image of universities different than that of the rest of the business community? If so, how?

Why do you think that is (is not) the case?

4D: The same question, only relative to local employers. How do the things that universities do in the community influence the image employers have of the schools?

4E: One more, how do you think the things we been discussing influence how community leaders, for example those in government, perceive the universities?

4F: What about [School 1] specifically? Any differences? Do the same things that influence the image of universities generally apply in the same way to [SCHOOL 1] or are we different in some ways?

RQ1/RQ2/RQ3

P1/P3



Q5: In this research we are interviewing three different groups: economic development experts, employers and alumni. Naturally, in some cases, there is some overlap but as a member of <insert group type> tell me how you think the activities we have been discussing influences the way you perceive universities in general. We'll come back to [School 1].

Follow up if needed: What activities related to business growth or economic development do you personally and professionally value most?

5A: Do think that holds true for other <insert group type>

5B; How do you think participants in the other groups <insert names as reminder> view universities as a result of these activities?

5C: Now, thinking specifically about [SCHOOL 1], how do these activities influence how you see the university?

5D: How about other (insert group name) – how do you think these activities influence how they see [SCHOOL 1]?

Follow up as needed: Second level probes about the segment the participant is part of  
RQ1/RW2/RQ3  
P2 A-C/P3

Q6: Like many communities, the Tampa region has several universities. Think about universities in general, not necessarily [School 1], what makes one university more effective at promoting business growth and economic development than another? What are the characteristics that make one university more effective than another?

Q6A: OK – a similar question. What makes one university better at developing a workforce than another?

Q6B: What about effective, high quality interns?

Q6C: How about generating good will in the community?

Q6D: How about promoting the image of the university – what makes one school better at than than another?

Q6D: Thinking about the answers you just provided, how effective is [School 1] specifically at those activities?

Follow up as needed: Tell me more about specific activities that promote the school? Which do you think are most effective at doing that?

Follow up as needed: How about [SCHOOL 1] – what things that we do are effective? What are we not doing?

RQ3

Q7: Considering your answers to the questions so far, tell me about why the three types of participants (employers, ED pros and alumni) would continue to engage with or support the universities in their communities? What traits or activities lead to those long term relationships?

Follow ups as needed:

Elaborate on specific activities

Elaborate on specific stakeholder groups

RQ1/RQ4

P1/P4 A-C

Q8: Next to last question. Think of this as the lightening round – I want your first impression and a brief response. I'm going to ask you to describe the impact of several types of activities that universities might provide the community and I want your impression of how each of them impact the image of the school in the community. If you are not familiar with the type of activity or it is not relevant to you feel free to say so and we'll move on to the next. Depending on your answer I may ask for some clarification or more detail.

Internships

Incubators

Sports

Campus facilities – such as meeting spaces or recreation

Faculty consulting

Class projects or student research

Student volunteerism

Humanities education

RQ2/RQ3/RQ5

P1/P2/P3/P4/P5

Q9: My last question is a free for all – answer it in any way you like.

Do you have a favorite story of a success or failure of university involvement in economic or community development?

APPENDIX F

DELPHI SURVEY 1

## Delphi One

### Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 Thank you again for your support of my research. This survey consists of five questions, each of which uses the same set of activities in which universities engage in support of local economic or business development. The list of activities is based on the information you and others in the study provided in the interviews. The survey is intended to measure your perceptions of these activities in the context of universities in general, not any specific institution including [School 1]. The questions are similar, so please read them carefully before answering.

As with the interviews, your participation is entirely voluntary, however your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Please answer each of them by clicking in the appropriate box. Based on my test, this survey should take you approximately 6-8 minutes. The bar at the bottom of the page will indicate your progress.

Q7 As with the interviews, your responses will be anonymous to everyone other than myself. However, please provide your name in the box below so I can analyze the data based on your affiliation with the university (for example, alumni).

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Q2 On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being less favorable and 7 being more favorable, please rate how favorably you view each of the following activities in which universities engage in support of local economic and community development.

	1 - LESS FAVORABLE (1)	2	3	4 - NEUTRAL (4)	5	6	7 - MORE FAVORABLE (7)
Student internships (1)	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>

Pro-bono faculty consulting (2)	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>
Incubators (3)	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>
Student volunteerism (4)	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>
Faculty participation on local boards or community organizations (5)	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>
Workforce development (6)	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>
Student consulting projects (7)	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>
Opening campus arts and culture to the community (8)	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>
Entrepreneurial education (9)	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>
Small business support and development (10)	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>
Student interaction with alumni (11)	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>	(	(	<input type="radio"/>



Student consulting projects (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opening campus arts and culture to the community (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Entrepreneurial education (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Small business support and development (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student interaction with alumni (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advertising or promoting the university (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
University leadership visibility or involvement in the community (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q5 On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being very low influence and 7 being very high influence, to what extent would each of the following activities influence your likelihood to consistently select one university as opposed to another for economic or business development projects for your firm or organization?

1- Very low	2 (2)	3 (3)	4- Neutral (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 - Very high
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Entrepreneurial education (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Small business support and development (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student interaction with alumni (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advertising or promoting the university (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
University leadership visibility or involvement in the community (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 You are done! Thanks again for your time and support. You will receive a shorter follow up survey in a few days to validate your answers and those of the other participants.

**End of Block: Default Question Block**

**Start of Block: Block 1**

APPENDIX G

DELPHI SURVEY 2

## Delphi Two

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Start of Block: Block 1

Q1 As before, thank you for participating in my research. This is the second, and LAST, survey in the process. The purpose of this survey is to attempt to reach consensus among all the participants regarding the research questions. This survey is shorter than the first with only three questions and fewer options, and should take you less than five minutes.

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Block 3

Q7 Please enter your name in the space below

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End of Block: Block 3

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q2 Please RANK how influential each of these five items is in determining your perception of a university's brand image, where 5 is the MOST influential and 1 is the LEAST influential.

To rank your choices select the appropriate radio button.

- Internships (1)
- Faculty participation in local business organizations (2)
- Workforce development (3)
- Entrepreneurial education (4)
- Small business development (5)

Q4 Please RANK how influential each of these five items is in determining your likelihood to hire one university's students for an internship or entry level position as opposed to another university's students, where 5 is the MOST influential and 1 is the LEAST

influential.

To rank your choices select the appropriate radio button.

- Internships (1)
- Faculty participation in local business organizations (2)
- Workforce development (3)
- Entrepreneurial education (4)
- Small business development (5)

Q6 Please RANK how influential each of these five items is in determining your likelihood to select one university for projects in your business or organization as opposed to another university, where 5 is the MOST influential and 1 is the LEAST influential. To rank your choices select the appropriate radio button.

- Internships (1)
- Faculty participation in local business organizations (2)
- Workforce development (3)
- Entrepreneurial education (4)
- Small business development (5)

Q7 This is an optional question. Please use the space below to add any activity that a university might engage in to support local economic or business development that you believe is particularly important to the university's image in the business community.

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End of Block: Default Question Block

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APPENDIX H

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Q1. On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being less favorable and 7 being more favorable, please rate how favorably you view each of the following activities in which universities engage in support of local economic and community development.

Table H 1  
Delphi 1, Question 1: All participants

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internships	15	2.00	7.00	5.6667	1.34519
Pro-bono faculty consulting	15	3.00	7.00	5.7333	1.16292
Incubators	15	4.00	7.00	5.7333	1.22280
Student volunteerism	15	4.00	7.00	5.7333	1.03280
Faculty participation	15	2.00	7.00	6.2667	1.33452
Workforce development	15	2.00	7.00	5.8667	1.55226
Student consulting	15	3.00	7.00	5.4667	1.12546
Campus arts and culture	15	3.00	7.00	5.6000	1.35225
Entrepreneurial education	15	4.00	7.00	6.1333	1.06010
Small business development	15	3.00	7.00	5.8000	1.42428
Student/alumni interaction	15	2.00	7.00	5.2667	1.38701
Promoting/advertising the university	15	3.00	7.00	5.4667	1.30201
Leadership visibility/involvement	15	3.00	7.00	6.1333	1.24595
Valid N (listwise)	15				

Q2. On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being very low influence and 7 being very high influence, please rate the extent to which each of following activities influences your overall perception of a university.

Table H 2  
Delphi 1, Question 2: All participants

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internships	15	2.00	7.00	5.6667	1.23443
Pro-bono faculty consulting	15	4.00	7.00	5.4667	1.12546
Incubators	15	4.00	7.00	5.7333	.96115
Student volunteerism	15	4.00	7.00	6.2667	.96115
Faculty participation	15	4.00	7.00	6.0000	.92582
Workforce development	15	2.00	7.00	5.0000	1.19523
Student consulting	15	4.00	7.00	5.8667	1.06010
Campus arts and culture	15	3.00	7.00	6.0667	1.22280
Entrepreneurial education	15	3.00	7.00	5.9333	1.43759
Small business development	15	1.00	7.00	4.6000	1.68184
Student/alumni interaction	15	3.00	7.00	5.6000	1.29835
Promoting/advertising the university	15	4.00	7.00	6.6667	.89974
Leadership visibility/involvement	15	4.00	7.00	6.0000	.75593
Valid N (listwise)	15				

Q3: On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being very low influence and 7 being very high influence, to what extent would each of the following activities influence your likelihood to consistently select one university as opposed to another for economic or business development projects for your firm or organization?

Table H 3  
Delphi 1, Question 3: All participants

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internships	15	4.00	7.00	6.0000	.75593
Pro-bono faculty consulting	14	4.00	7.00	5.7857	1.05090
Incubators	14	4.00	7.00	5.7143	1.06904
Student volunteerism	14	4.00	7.00	5.5000	1.01905
Faculty participation	14	3.00	7.00	6.1429	1.23146
Workforce development	14	4.00	7.00	6.0714	.91687
Student consulting	14	2.00	7.00	5.2143	1.31140
Campus arts and culture	14	1.00	6.00	4.8571	1.35062
Entrepreneurial education	14	4.00	7.00	6.0714	1.14114
Small business development	14	4.00	7.00	6.2143	1.12171
Student/alumni interaction	14	1.00	6.00	4.5714	1.22250
Promoting/advertising the university	14	1.00	7.00	5.2857	1.54066
Leadership visibility/involvement	14	5.00	7.00	6.5000	.85485
Valid N (listwise)	14				

Q4: Considering those same activities in which universities engage in support of local economic and community development, on a scale of 1 to 7 with 1 being very low influence and 7 being very high influence, to what extent does each positively influence your perception of the university's brand image?

Table H 4  
Delphi 1, Question 4: All participants

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internships	14	5.00	7.00	6.2143	.69929
Pro-bono faculty consulting	14	5.00	7.00	5.8571	.86444
Incubators	14	4.00	7.00	5.8571	1.02711
Faculty participation	14	5.00	7.00	6.4286	.75593
Workforce development	14	5.00	7.00	6.0000	.55470
Student consulting	14	2.00	7.00	5.2143	1.18831
Campus arts and culture	14	4.00	7.00	5.7143	1.26665
Entrepreneurial education	14	4.00	7.00	6.0000	1.03775
Small business development	14	5.00	7.00	6.0714	.91687
Student/alumni interaction	14	2.00	7.00	5.0714	1.26881
Promoting/advertising the university	14	4.00	7.00	5.8571	.94926
Leadership visibility/involvement	14	5.00	7.00	6.6429	.74495
Valid N (listwise)	14				

Q5: On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being very low influence and 7 being very high influence, to what extent would each of the following activities influence your likelihood to consistently hire one university's interns or recent graduates as opposed to another university's?

Table H 5  
Delphi 1, Question 5: All participants

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pro-bono faculty consulting	14	2.00	7.00	5.0000	1.30089
Incubators	14	3.00	7.00	5.5000	1.01905
Student volunteerism	14	4.00	7.00	5.6429	.92878
Faculty participation	14	3.00	7.00	5.7143	1.26665
Workforce development	14	3.00	7.00	5.5714	1.22250
Student consulting	14	4.00	7.00	6.0000	.96077
Campus arts and culture	14	1.00	6.00	4.4286	1.28388
Entrepreneurial education	13	4.00	7.00	6.0000	1.08012
Small business development	14	4.00	7.00	5.9286	.91687
Student/alumni interaction	14	2.00	7.00	4.7143	1.32599
Promoting/advertising the university	14	4.00	7.00	5.1429	1.02711
Leadership visibility/involvement	14	4.00	7.00	6.1429	1.02711
Valid N (listwise)	13				

## Research Questions 2

RQ2 2a) The brand equity of the institution, as perceived by the key alumni segment, will be more positively influenced by the symbolic ED activities related to university image and visibility than by other economic development activities

Table H 6  
RQ 2a: Alumni segment

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internships	5	4.00	7.00	5.6000	1.14018
Pro-bono faculty consulting	5	4.00	7.00	5.6000	1.14018
Incubators	5	4.00	7.00	5.6000	1.34164
Faculty participation	5	6.00	7.00	6.4000	.54772
Workforce development	5	6.00	7.00	6.8000	.44721
Student consulting	5	5.00	7.00	6.4000	.89443
Campus arts and culture	5	4.00	7.00	5.8000	1.09545
Entrepreneurial education	5	4.00	7.00	5.4000	1.14018
Small business development	5	4.00	7.00	6.0000	1.22474
Student/alumni interaction	5	3.00	7.00	6.0000	1.73205
Promoting/advertising the university	5	3.00	7.00	5.4000	1.51658
Leadership visibility/involvement	5	3.00	7.00	6.0000	1.73205
Valid N (listwise)	5				

RQ 2b) The brand equity of the institution, as perceived by the employer segment, will be more positively influenced by those activities directly involving experiential student activities than by other economic development activities.

Table H 7  
Research Question 2b: Employer segment

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internships	4	6.00	7.00	6.2500	.50000
Pro-bono faculty consulting	4	4.00	7.00	6.0000	1.41421
Incubators	4	5.00	7.00	6.0000	.81650
Faculty participation	4	6.00	7.00	6.7500	.50000
Workforce development	4	6.00	7.00	6.2500	.50000
Student consulting	4	5.00	7.00	6.0000	.81650
Campus arts and culture	4	5.00	7.00	5.7500	.95743
Entrepreneurial education	4	6.00	7.00	6.2500	.50000
Small business development	4	3.00	7.00	5.5000	1.73205
Student/alumni interaction	4	3.00	7.00	4.7500	1.70783
Promoting/advertising the university	4	4.00	6.00	5.0000	.81650
Leadership visibility/involvement	4	7.00	7.00	7.0000	.00000
Valid N (listwise)	4				

RQ 2c) The brand equity of the institution, as perceived by the economic development professionals segment, will be more positively influenced by the functional activities related to ED than by other activities.

Table H 8  
Research Question 2c: ED professional segment

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internships	6	5.00	7.00	6.0000	.89443
Pro-bono faculty consulting	6	5.00	7.00	6.3333	.81650
Incubators	6	4.00	7.00	5.8333	1.16905
Faculty participation	6	4.00	7.00	5.3333	1.21106
Workforce development	6	6.00	7.00	6.6667	.51640
Student consulting	6	5.00	7.00	6.3333	.81650
Campus arts and culture	6	3.00	6.00	4.6667	1.03280
Entrepreneurial education	6	5.00	7.00	6.0000	1.09545
Small business development	6	6.00	7.00	6.5000	.54772
Student/alumni interaction	6	6.00	7.00	6.5000	.54772
Promoting/advertising the university	6	2.00	7.00	5.3333	1.75119
Leadership visibility/involvement	6	4.00	7.00	5.1667	1.16905
Valid N (listwise)	6				

### Research Question 3

RQ 3) There will be a relationship between the extent to which the participants value the ED activities in which the HEI engages and the extent to which those activities positively influence the brand image of the HEI as perceived by the participants.

Table H 9  
Research Question 3: Alumni segment

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internships	5	5.00	6.00	5.8000	.44721
Pro-bono faculty consulting	5	5.00	7.00	5.6000	.89443
Incubators	5	4.00	7.00	5.4000	1.14018
Faculty participation	5	5.00	7.00	6.0000	.70711
Workforce development	5	5.00	6.00	5.8000	.44721
Student consulting	5	4.00	6.00	5.0000	.70711
Campus arts and culture	5	4.00	7.00	4.8000	1.30384
Entrepreneurial education	5	4.00	7.00	6.0000	1.41421
Small business development	5	5.00	7.00	6.2000	1.09545
Student/alumni interaction	5	4.00	6.00	5.2000	.83666
Promoting/advertising the university	5	5.00	7.00	6.2000	1.09545
Leadership visibility/involvement	5	5.00	7.00	6.2000	1.09545
Valid N (listwise)	5				

Table H 10  
Research Question 3: Employer segment

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internships	4	6.00	7.00	6.7500	.50000
Pro-bono faculty consulting	4	5.00	7.00	5.7500	.95743
Incubators	4	5.00	7.00	6.2500	.95743
Faculty participation	4	7.00	7.00	7.0000	.00000
Workforce development	4	6.00	7.00	6.2500	.50000
Student consulting	4	5.00	7.00	6.0000	.81650
Campus arts and culture	4	4.00	7.00	5.7500	1.25831
Entrepreneurial education	4	5.00	7.00	5.7500	.95743
Small business development	4	5.00	7.00	6.0000	1.15470
Student/alumni interaction	4	4.00	6.00	4.7500	.95743
Promoting/advertising the university	4	4.00	6.00	5.0000	.81650
Leadership visibility/involvement	4	7.00	7.00	7.0000	.00000
Valid N (listwise)	4				

Table H 11  
Research Question 3: ED segment

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internships	5	5.00	7.00	6.2000	.83666
Pro-bono faculty consulting	5	5.00	7.00	6.2000	.83666
Incubators	5	5.00	7.00	6.0000	1.00000
Faculty participation	5	5.00	7.00	6.4000	.89443
Workforce development	5	5.00	7.00	6.0000	.70711
Student consulting	5	2.00	6.00	4.8000	1.64317
Campus arts and culture	5	6.00	7.00	6.6000	.54772
Entrepreneurial education	5	5.00	7.00	6.2000	.83666
Small business development	5	5.00	7.00	6.0000	.70711
Student/alumni interaction	5	2.00	7.00	5.2000	1.92354
Promoting/advertising the university	5	6.00	7.00	6.2000	.44721
Leadership visibility/involvement	5	6.00	7.00	6.8000	.44721
Valid N (listwise)	5				

#### Research Question 4

RQ 4a). The brand loyalty of the alumni segment will be most influenced by those activities the alumni participants perceive as positively influencing the status of the institution.



Note: RQ 4 is dependent on two questions in the survey. The tables below display the results for Questions 3 and 5, respectively, for each segment.

The blue arrows note those items (activities) which are considered to most relevant to the segment.

Table H 12  
Research Question 4: Question 3, Alumni segment (preference in company projects)

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internships	5	6.00	6.00	6.0000	.00000
Pro-bono faculty consulting	5	4.00	7.00	5.4000	1.14018
Incubators	5	4.00	7.00	5.4000	1.14018
Student volunteerism	5	4.00	7.00	5.4000	1.14018
Faculty participation	5	4.00	7.00	5.8000	1.09545
Workforce development	5	4.00	7.00	5.6000	1.14018
Student consulting	5	4.00	6.00	4.8000	.83666
Campus arts and culture	5	4.00	6.00	5.0000	.70711
Entrepreneurial education	5	4.00	7.00	6.0000	1.41421
Small business development	5	4.00	7.00	5.6000	1.51658
Student/alumni interaction	5	4.00	5.00	4.8000	.44721
Promoting/advertising the university	5	4.00	7.00	5.6000	1.34164
Leadership visibility/involvement	5	5.00	7.00	6.2000	1.09545
Valid N (listwise)	5				

Table H 13

Research Question 4: Question 5, Alumni segment (preference in student hiring)

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pro-bono faculty consulting	5	5.00	6.00	5.6000	.54772
Incubators	5	4.00	7.00	5.6000	1.14018
Student volunteerism	5	4.00	7.00	5.6000	1.14018
Faculty participation	5	4.00	7.00	5.4000	1.14018
Workforce development	5	4.00	7.00	5.8000	1.09545
Student consulting	5	4.00	6.00	5.2000	.83666
Campus arts and culture	5	4.00	6.00	4.4000	.89443
Entrepreneurial education	5	4.00	7.00	6.0000	1.41421
Small business development	5	5.00	7.00	6.0000	1.00000
Student/alumni interaction	5	3.00	6.00	4.6000	1.34164
Promoting/advertising the university	5	4.00	7.00	5.4000	1.51658
Leadership visibility/involvement	5	4.00	7.00	5.6000	1.34164
Valid N (listwise)	5				

RQ 4b) The brand loyalty of the employer segment will be most influenced by those activities they perceive as directly supporting student development.

Table H 14

Research Question 4: Question 3, Employer segment (preference in company projects)

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internships	4	6.00	7.00	6.7500	.50000
Pro-bono faculty consulting	4	4.00	7.00	5.7500	1.25831
Incubators	4	6.00	7.00	6.2500	.50000
Student volunteerism	4	4.00	7.00	5.7500	1.25831
Faculty participation	4	6.00	7.00	6.7500	.50000
Workforce development	4	6.00	7.00	6.5000	.57735
Student consulting	4	6.00	7.00	6.5000	.57735
Campus arts and culture	4	4.00	6.00	5.0000	1.15470
Entrepreneurial education	4	5.00	7.00	6.0000	1.15470
Small business development	4	5.00	7.00	6.0000	.81650
Student/alumni interaction	4	4.00	6.00	5.0000	.81650
Promoting/advertising the university	4	5.00	6.00	5.5000	.57735
Leadership visibility/involvement	4	7.00	7.00	7.0000	.00000
Valid N (listwise)	4				

Table H 15

Research Question 4: Question 5, Employer segment (preference in student hiring)

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pro-bono faculty consulting	4	4.00	6.00	5.0000	.81650
Incubators	4	5.00	6.00	5.7500	.50000
Student volunteerism	4	5.00	7.00	5.5000	1.00000
Faculty participation	4	5.00	7.00	6.5000	1.00000
Workforce development	4	5.00	7.00	6.2500	.95743
Student consulting	4	6.00	7.00	6.7500	.50000
Campus arts and culture	4	4.00	6.00	4.7500	.95743
Entrepreneurial education	4	5.00	7.00	6.0000	1.15470
Small business development	4	4.00	7.00	5.5000	1.29099
Student/alumni interaction	4	4.00	5.00	4.5000	.57735
Promoting/advertising the university	4	4.00	6.00	5.0000	.81650
Leadership visibility/involvement	4	6.00	7.00	6.7500	.50000
Valid N (listwise)	4				

RQ 4c) The brand loyalty of the economic development professional segment will be most influenced by those activities the ED participants perceive as positively benefitting the local business community.

Table H 16  
 Research Question 4: Question 3, ED segment (preference in company projects)

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internships	6	4.00	6.00	5.5000	.83666
Pro-bono faculty consulting	5	5.00	7.00	6.2000	.83666
Incubators	5	4.00	7.00	5.6000	1.34164
Student volunteerism	5	4.00	6.00	5.4000	.89443
Faculty participation	5	3.00	7.00	6.0000	1.73205
Workforce development	5	5.00	7.00	6.2000	.83666
Student consulting	5	2.00	6.00	4.6000	1.51658
Campus arts and culture	5	1.00	6.00	4.6000	2.07364
Entrepreneurial education	5	5.00	7.00	6.2000	1.09545
Small business development	5	7.00	7.00	7.0000	.00000
Student/alumni interaction	5	1.00	6.00	4.0000	1.87083
Promoting/advertising the university	5	1.00	7.00	4.8000	2.28035
Leadership visibility/involvement	5	5.00	7.00	6.4000	.89443
Valid N (listwise)	5				

Table H 17  
 Research Question 4: Question 5, ED segment (preference in student hiring)

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pro-bono faculty consulting	5	2.00	7.00	4.4000	1.94936
Incubators	5	3.00	6.00	5.2000	1.30384
Student volunteerism	5	5.00	7.00	5.8000	.83666
Faculty participation	5	3.00	7.00	5.4000	1.51658
Workforce development	5	3.00	6.00	4.8000	1.30384
Student consulting	5	5.00	7.00	6.2000	.83666
Campus arts and culture	5	1.00	6.00	4.2000	1.92354
Entrepreneurial education	5	5.00	7.00	6.0000	.70711
Small business development	5	6.00	7.00	6.2000	.44721
Student/alumni interaction	5	2.00	7.00	5.0000	1.87083
Promoting/advertising the university	5	4.00	6.00	5.0000	.70711
Leadership visibility/involvement	5	5.00	7.00	6.2000	.83666
Valid N (listwise)	5				

### Research Question 5

RQ 5a) In evaluating the brand image of a university, the alumni segment will most value those ED activities that they perceive as positively influencing the reputation of the institution.

Table H 18  
Research Question 5: Alumni segment

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pro-bono faculty consulting	5	5.00	6.00	5.6000	.54772
Incubators	5	4.00	7.00	5.6000	1.14018
Student volunteerism	5	4.00	7.00	5.6000	1.14018
Faculty participation	5	4.00	7.00	5.4000	1.14018
Workforce development	5	4.00	7.00	5.8000	1.09545
Student consulting	5	4.00	6.00	5.2000	.83666
Campus arts and culture	5	4.00	6.00	4.4000	.89443
Entrepreneurial education	5	4.00	7.00	6.0000	1.41421
Small business development	5	5.00	7.00	6.0000	1.00000
Student/alumni interaction	5	3.00	6.00	4.6000	1.34164
Promoting/advertising the university	5	4.00	7.00	5.4000	1.51658
Leadership visibility/involvement	5	4.00	7.00	5.6000	1.34164
Valid N (listwise)	5				

RQ 5b) In evaluating the brand image of a university, the employer segment will most value those ED activities that they perceive as directly benefitting students.

Table H 19  
Research Question 5: Employer segment

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pro-bono faculty consulting	4	4.00	6.00	5.0000	.81650
Incubators	4	5.00	6.00	5.7500	.50000
Student volunteerism	4	5.00	7.00	5.5000	1.00000
Faculty participation	4	5.00	7.00	6.5000	1.00000
Workforce development	4	5.00	7.00	6.2500	.95743
Student consulting	4	6.00	7.00	6.7500	.50000
Campus arts and culture	4	4.00	6.00	4.7500	.95743
Entrepreneurial education	4	5.00	7.00	6.0000	1.15470
Small business development	4	4.00	7.00	5.5000	1.29099
Student/alumni interaction	4	4.00	5.00	4.5000	.57735
Promoting/advertising the university	4	4.00	6.00	5.0000	.81650
Leadership visibility/involvement	4	6.00	7.00	6.7500	.50000
Valid N (listwise)	4				

RQ 5c) In evaluating the brand image of a university, the economic development professional segment will most value those ED activities that they perceive as positively benefitting the local community.

Table H 20  
Research Question 5: ED professional segment

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pro-bono faculty consulting	5	2.00	7.00	4.4000	1.94936
Incubators	5	3.00	6.00	5.2000	1.30384
Student volunteerism	5	5.00	7.00	5.8000	.83666
Faculty participation	5	3.00	7.00	5.4000	1.51658
Workforce development	5	3.00	6.00	4.8000	1.30384
Student consulting	5	5.00	7.00	6.2000	.83666
Campus arts and culture	5	1.00	6.00	4.2000	1.92354
Entrepreneurial education	5	5.00	7.00	6.0000	.70711
Small business development	5	6.00	7.00	6.2000	.44721
Student/alumni interaction	5	2.00	7.00	5.0000	1.87083
Promoting/advertising the university	5	4.00	6.00	5.0000	.70711
Leadership visibility/involvement	5	5.00	7.00	6.2000	.83666
Valid N (listwise)	5				