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Exploring External Engagement in Higher Education Through Defining Partnerships

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EXPLORING EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

THROUGH DEFINING PARTNERSHIPS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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BY

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This is dedicated to my boys, Jimmy, and Marty.

Listen to your teachers, be kind to your friends, and above all else, learn and have fun!

"Somewhere inside, we hear a voice. It leads us in the direction of the person we wish to become. But it is up to us whether or not to follow."

—Pat Tillman

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ABSTRACT

This research study has been designed to be an evergreen project to help higher education institutions define their external partnerships. Lewin's Model of Action Research has been used to create and test a model of external engagement through a practitioner-scholar framework, which was later redesigned and renamed as the Reaney Model of External Engagement with the intent for continuous improvement. Further research and testing of this model will be needed to strengthen the Reaney Model of External Engagement core while considering external factors in higher education.

Challenges that may arise to help higher education institutions clearly define external partnerships may include, but are not limited to, power dynamics within the institution, external and internal political climate, the financial health of the higher education institution, and unforeseen external factors (e.g., the 2020 pandemic).

Assuming the best intent of both parties (i.e., the higher education institution and the external partner), a common language on how the level of engagement is defined and utilized is critical to the model's success at its core. With continuous improvement and dedicated utilization of the model, external and internal stakeholders should build stronger relationships to matriculate external partners to a deeper level of engagement within the university.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

To center the reader of this research study, I will be using the well-defined and established practitioner-scholar framework, which utilizes my 20 years of higher education administrative and faculty experience, plus my third-party executive leadership experience in the nonprofit sector to honor the observation notes, reflection passages, and theoretical questions which are asked and answered during this research study. As stated from Bouck and Caddo Parish Public Schools (n.d.), "Insight gleaned from various educational theories and paradigms combine to form my personal bricolage for helping ensure that education serves to emancipate rather than shackle future generations" (p. 205).

Also, writing from a place of vulnerability has been very challenging for a newer researcher to find the exact words to find relevance in the work I am passionate about within the intersectionality of external relations and higher education. I have researched, observed, and uncovered many mysteries with external engagement and higher education institutions over the past ten years while pursuing my doctorate. It wasn't until I came upon a recent article from 2023 that I could identify challenges others faced within higher education in similar spaces. They defined the challenges for practitioner-scholars as a tug of war between wearing multiple past administrative functions of day-to-day roles while retaining observation notes from the ground-level personal interactions. I have felt the constant pressure of imposture syndrome from not having the educational background or research knowledge to put academic scholarship into the

proper words to be accepted by my peers within the academy. However, there is a great need within our field to acknowledge these fantastic, trailblazing higher education professionals who are redefining our universities. "Approaching practitioner-scholars as identities, roles, professional responsibilities/functions of work, and inclusive ways of being in higher education may be better descriptors for practitioner-scholars" (Bloomgarden & Green, 2023).

To find the words I have been lacking in my description of what a practitioner-scholar means, I turn to a fellow practitioner-scholar, Paul Spector, for his definition:

> Practitioner scholars understand academic research, both content and methodology. They can conduct research, but their focus is more on applying academic knowledge than (on) creating it. They can bridge the academic and practice worlds by taking findings from the academic literature and translating them into practice, such as creating an intervention that is based on theory. (Spector, 2023)

This study will have practical implications for both faculty, staff, students, and administration. Therefore, there are multiple viewpoints to consider when analyzing the research in this study. To center the reader, this study was also centered around the scholar-administrator framework, a channel for change agency within the conversation of higher education. As outlined in a Janke,

> It is time to better recognize and support the role of scholar-administrators as key change agents on our campuses. They are critical to supporting the work of others, pursuing new ideas emerging technologies, and expanding approaches to generating scholarship. Scholar administrators are key partners in helping institutions of higher education transform their policies, practices, and cultures because they possess both the tools of administration and research. (Janke, 2019)

Higher education institutions[1] are prominent in the United States ecosystem. Since the oldest university, Harvard University in Cambridge, MA, was founded in 1636, higher education institutions have opened minds to opportunities for new knowledge creation, thought-provoking

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[1] Higher Educational Institutions: "Higher education institutions include traditional universities and professional-oriented institutions, which are called universities of applied sciences or polytechnics." (*What Is Higher Education Institution | IGI Global*, n.d.).

intellectual conversation, and scholarship, with a shared community of learners inside and outside the classroom. In the modern day, marketing departments within higher education institutions have "sold" their product of higher education to prospective students and families as a beautiful way to enhance oneself, that knowledge is power, and that formal education will open new doors for advanced opportunities. When higher education institutions were first established in America, they were centered on the wealthy who could afford to attend, making them a privilege for the elite and predominantly the white, wealthy males. As the economic gaps are still widening among its citizens in America, access to affordable advanced education is still a challenge, with no golden ticket in sight to bridge the divide (Kearney & Levine, 2016).

Innovation had never been a strength for the academy, especially when is come to technology (Fine, 2023). However, this might be shifting partly due to new consumer needs and expectations in higher education. In recent years, the importance of college majors pipelining directly to career pathways has been tightly connected to the decision-making process of future students and their families. A former nonprofit CEO recently stated their interest in starting an online university for traditional-aged students (18-22-year-olds). The investors he is partnering with to fund the new university (*Polymath University*, n.d.), have designed a new model for higher education that is unlike any other university. As part of the new university model, upon graduation, students will receive three distinct bachelor's degrees in three separate fields, yet their subject matter and skill set will be interdisciplinary. This approach is marketed to be a holistic vision of what the current workforce needs. While recognizing a need for innovation within higher education is vital for growth and sustainability, traditional human resource officers and employers may not be ready to hire a 22-year-old fresh college graduate who has earned three bachelor's degrees. Also, starting a new model of higher education requires future students

and their families to buy into the new framework. Innovation is critical for higher education's survival and sustained relevance in society, and there are additional researchers also working on this model as well (*Project Polymath: Catalyzing Interdisciplinary Education for a New Renaissance*, n.d.). Still, much more research and testing are needed to explore further how the academy can change for the greater good of all its stakeholders.

As with many organizations in the business sector, higher education institutions need to assess their financial situation constantly. Assessing their financial situation entails deep analysis and transparency of their budget, future enrollment projections, development prospecting for major gift donors, and review of expenditures. During this budgeting process, higher education institution administrators ponder the following questions: is the institution's tuition discounting strategy competitive to families and financially responsible for the institution's bottom line? And what may the financial fallout be if tuition is increased year after year? Are we retaining the talent, both faculty and staff, that is suitable for the current and future needs of the institution? To these questions, the internal cost of hiring faculty and staff at competitive wages, plus the increasing inflation costs, have made balancing internal budgets difficult, no matter how substantial an institution's endowment might be. The financial challenges of higher education institutions do not outweigh the public perception of the cost of tuition or the challenges families face.

According to a recent article from the Public Policy Institute of California, "Sticker shock and an understandable reluctance to take on debt lead many students and parents alike to wonder if college will yield higher earnings, better jobs, and a brighter future down the road" ("Is College Worth It?", 2023). As you can see from Table 1, the annual salaries in 2021 show the value added, over time, to one's income from higher education.

Table 1**.** Relationship Between College Degree and Salary

A college degree pays off
Annual wage and salary income

● 25th percentile ● 50th percentile ● 75th percentile

	$40K	$60K	$80K	$100K	$120K	$140K	$160K
Less than high school							
High school diploma							
Some college							
Associate degree							
Bachelor's degree							
Advanced degree							

SOURCE: American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, 2021.
Get the data • Embed • Download image
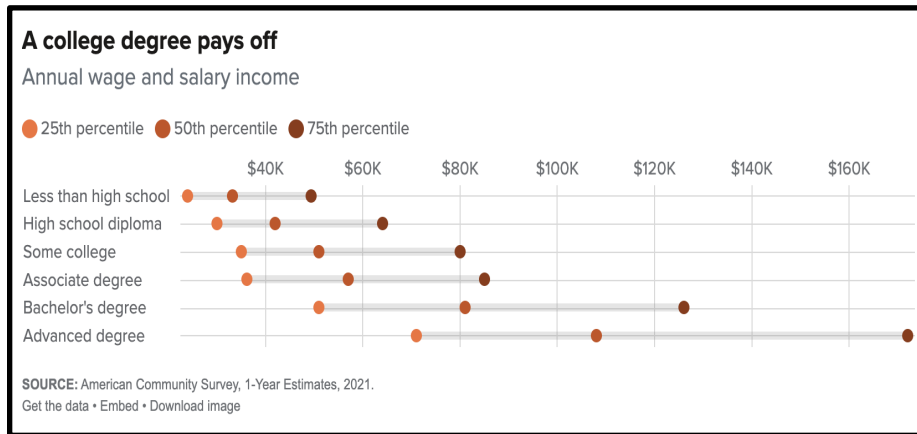
This accessibility to higher education for the wealthy or the narrative of those willing to fall into debt by attending a university was not always the drumbeat rhetoric. I was fortunate to attend a 50th-class reunion at a local institution a few years ago. Many alumni shared their student experiences and stories on how they worked full-time jobs during the day to pay for their tuition and take their coursework at night. During this same period, there was also a push for the "Greatest Generation" to attend college after their drafted military service to encourage the usage of their G.I. benefits, of which both private and public institutions benefited from these full-pay students. According to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (1944) (2022),

> Signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on June 22, 1944, this act, also known as the G.I. Bill, provided World War II veterans with funds for college education, unemployment insurance, and housing. It put higher education within the reach of millions of veterans of WWII and later military conflicts. (p. 1)

Higher education professionals can reflect upon the strength of the "Greatest Generation" as university students and create innovative solutions for reducing the cost of education to allow greater equality to access new knowledge and training for the future workforce.

Problems with External Relationships and Higher Education Institutions

Many higher education institutions have different offices that work with external partnerships outside the campus walls. These offices may include but are not limited to, career services, alumni relations, corporate and foundation relations, athletics, and professors' relationships with their networks. These relationships benefit the university in some capacity, including some with financial gain. The relationship's nature will determine the importance level for the external relationship. The internal higher education and the contact who manages these relationships are captured in various databases. As you can imagine, with the amount of data collected at a higher education institution, there are private and public data in multiple places, (McDonald, 2023). Students, alumni, faculty, staff, and external partners often complain that if they update their contact information in one system, it needs to be updated in all the systems. It is challenging when computer systems do not communicate internally, as is the case at many higher education institutions. These systemic challenges cause friction between colleagues as well as external partners. The concept of a central system for analyzing the data and managing key university stakeholders has been floating around higher education institutions for years, without dedicated staff or resources to support the initiative. Also, if faculty or staff members leave the institution without capturing the status of the external relationship, efforts may be damaged or replicated. While there are system challenges to these external relationships, there is also the problem of exploring multi-touch points to the relationship and how/if the relationship can be elevated beyond the scope of the one internal office working with the external partner. Many higher education practitioners who explored these internal challenges question: What internal challenges face cross-higher education ecosystems on collaborations? Where is the red tape indicated by higher education institutions that can be removed for the greater good of the

external partnerships and the institution? Once the internal challenges have been identified, higher education institutions can test a model of engaging their external alliances with greater alignment for all stakeholders by defining what constitutes each level of their individual institution's engagement with external partnerships.

By creating a more straightforward definition of these levels of external partnership engagement and developing processes for capturing stakeholder engagement, higher education institutions can identify growth opportunities, identify social impact or existing relationships, cultivate dormant stakeholders, or sunset partnerships that are not working for both parties involved.

Purpose of this Study

This mixed-method study aims to investigate, understand, and define relationships between higher education institutions and external partners. These defined relationships allow for greater exploration of existing and potential partnerships for institutions to augment their financial needs, not put extra expenses on students, and/or cut the administrative budget, which is already a very trim budget at many higher education institutions.

Existing literature connecting the intersectionality of higher education institutions and external partnerships has been collated into three categories: academic capitalism, external partnerships, and organizational change management relative to higher education. In Chapter Two, these three categories of literature are analyzed, and gaps are identified for growth opportunities.

Dissertation Research Questions

My research questions are: (1) What challenges do higher education institutions face when engaging external audiences? and (2) Through research, testing, and feedback, can there be

clearly defined external engagement levels with higher education? Learning about new ways of external partnerships may foster healthier financial stability for many institutions, leading to more significant scholarship opportunities and tuition discounting for students.

Methodology

The methodology for this research study is an exploratory sequential design in a mixed-method research approach through Lewin's Action Research Framework, which will be defined later in the research study. To begin, I conducted an exploratory focus group composed of senior leadership administrators in higher education to obtain an understanding of the systematic challenges higher education faces with their external partnerships. This qualitative data will be analyzed to identify themes to either support or my practitioner-researcher observations and literature review notes or represent new findings. I will notate this using a holistic coding approach for qualitative analysis. This analysis will be utilized for designing a model of external partnership engagement that higher education institutions can use as a framework of external engagement. Once the model is designed, a video will be created to explain the model and the usage of the model in practical use for higher education institutions. To analyze the potential efficacy of the model, a quantitative survey will be sent out with a link to the video of the model and explanation for higher education staff and faculty to analyze a new model of engagement for to consider using with their institution's external partners. The feedback from the survey will inform answering the research questions of (1) What challenges do higher education institutions face when engaging external audiences? and (2) Through research, testing, and feedback, can there be clearly defined external engagement levels with higher education?

Significance of this Research Study

The significance of this study is, first and foremost, that it is grounded from a practitioner-scholar viewpoint through the action research framework, centered on a real challenge facing higher education institutions today. This methodology, as share by Hebert and University of Central Arkansas (n.d.), "is constant motion within the system as it continues to evolve, requiring the scholar-practitioner to change as he or she researches, analyzes, teaches, learns, and grows" (p. 34). Through my research and networking, I have uncovered only one other researcher remotely working in external engagement; however, his topic is adjacent to mine.

Next, when my research was conducted, there had yet to be a study of this caliber in a post-COVID-19 higher education and economic workforce related to this topic of external engagement. By researching this topic, higher education institutions can establish stronger internal and external collaborations. Also, many higher education institutions have fractionated views on how and when to with their external audiences. Through my research, I have yet to uncover any clear definitions used by higher education professionals on what type of relationships they have with their external partners, or they would like to have in the future.

Furthermore, higher education institutions are trying to figure out the "special sauce" on how to reinvent themselves to meet their future students, current students, and external partners. The greater challenge is the multiple stakeholders with different needs, which required an entire ecosystem overhaul. Engaging external partners is a critical step to understanding the current marketplace of future learners. Higher education institutions need more capital due to rising costs, and external partners may be able to support through their financial investments.

Assumptions for this Study

My assumption is to create a clear definition to be used within the ecosystem of higher education institutions on their current and future external partnerships. Having a common language among all higher education professionals will help clarify relationships within the institutions and external partners. Using a standardized model I created, these more precise definitions will help grow external partnership relationships for institutions. This model will be tested, and feedback will be constantly analyzed and applied through Lewin's Model of Action Research for future studies. Some institutions may have a "homegrown model" for their external partnership. However, a unified standardization of a model can be beneficial for having a shared language and understanding for external partners, especially when working with multiple institutions simultaneously.

Research Study Limitations

This study's limitations are limited to the participants' feedback from the exploratory focus group for Data Set I and the research survey results from Data Set II. As mentioned above, I have been in higher education for the past 20 academic years; however, my professional network is limited to the Midwest area. I have been circulating advertisements for this dissertation research within a few national professional organizations, and they will support the dissemination of my survey link.

A delimitation for this study will focus on four-year higher education institutions, both private and public, in the United States of America. The study will not focus on two-year community colleges or international higher education intuitions; however, this research may also benefit those institutions.

While this research study aims to help create defined levels of external partnerships with higher education, it is also relevant to define what external stakeholders create these external groups. These external groups may include but are not limited to government offices, corporations, nonprofits, foundations, professional associations, and small businesses. The external partnership is a shared-experience relationship that should benefit both parties involved with written documentation of the terms and dates of the external partnership agreement with the higher education institution. Limitations to this study may also involve senior administration at a higher education institution if they are unwilling to formalize an agreement between their institution and the external partner.

Personal Statement

My research position is that of a first-generation college student, a higher education professional with 20 years of experience as an administrator, and a current senior leader for an external partnership nonprofit organization that engages with higher education institutions. My interest in researching this sector weighs heavily on the notion that we can do better, both higher education institutions and external partnerships. As I am finding my voice as a practitioner-scholar and researcher in higher education and my observations as a trusted advisor to my external relationships with university partners, I have identified a need to have space for this conversation within higher education.

Over the past several years, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all aspects of learning and teaching, as well as how educators and administrators conduct the "business" of education. The business model (or, as I refer to it, the foundation of all higher education practices) to which higher education institutions align has also been impacted due to the unpredictability of economic, healthcare, political, and geo-global systems. Plus, the world and the people who learn

and work within higher education institutions vastly differ based on their needs and educational goals. An increase in non-budgeted external funding for higher education institutions can assist with financial strains on higher education institutions. Also, increasing engagement with external partners, like corporations, can help increase their employee pipeline, create classroom project-based work, and additional collaborative endeavors for research.

In summary, this research study explores how higher education institutions view their external partnership and a pathway for higher education institutions to deepen their external relationships through a tested model framework. This new model will demonstrate how to strengthen existing external partnerships to move said relationship to a deeper level of engagement through different cultivation touchpoints.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Historical Context on Academic Capitalism in Higher Education

Kevin McClure, an associate professor of higher education at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, describes, "The theory of academic capitalism was designed to help us describe and explain how colleges and universities are changing in response to a couple of external pressures" (Koenig, 2019). These academic pressures are developed by external forces changing the traditional foundations of higher education institutions. The term academic capitalism was first coined by Hackett (2014). He states, "In 1990, I coined the term academic capitalism to extend Max Weber's insight from its origins in the German university system of the early 1900s to the emerging circumstances of academic engineering and science in the contemporary United States" (p. 635). Much of academic capitalism was associated with paraprofessional schools at universities as there were many synergies between the research and development (R&D), needs of corporations, and research opportunities for graduate students and faculty. There was much support in the 1990s for universities and external partnerships with America for R&D. Centered around organizational theoretical frameworks, Leslie et al. (2011) analyzed academic capitalism through the lens of revenue and expenditures within higher education institutions. These frameworks uncovered those public institutional centers that focus on research and demonstrate their academic capitalism through institutional theory.

In contrast, private institutions centered their academic capitalism on the revenue theory of costs and neo-institutional theory. This research is essential to note as it sets the table on how

each institution has its own culture and how it receives and spends its monetary support. Still, it

also shows insight into how each institution's personnel are also influenced (both positively and

negatively) by the financial support of external partnerships.

Grounded in foundational work by Slaughter and Leslie (1997),

By using academic capitalism as our central concept, we define the reality of the nascent
environment of public research universities, an environment full of contradictions, in
which faculty and professional staff expend their human capital stocks increasingly in
competitive situations. (p. 16)

This research was expanded upon to include private institutions. In Slaughter and Leslie's (2001)

work,

We still identified reduced state resources as the trigger for academic capitalism;
however, we began to think about the enactment or adaptation of academic capitalism by
concrete actors and organizational units in terms of external and internal mechanisms,
organizational restructuring, or interstitial emergence of new organizations; products,
processes and services, and their markets, public and private; managerial rewards and
incentives, penalties and disincentives; and of course, ideology. (p. 2)

Some partnership agreements involving academic capitalism within higher education can be

convoluted. According to Slaughter (2001), "the boundaries between higher education, the state,

and the private sector are becoming increasingly permeable, and both faculty and administrators

may be subverted members of multiple public and private organizations, which mediate their

historic adversarial posture" (p. 394). These blurred lines between external and higher education

interests have been defined over the years. Still, they can be convoluted, leaving room for many

interpretations, as demonstrated in the literature below.

University Faculty Intersection with Academic Capitalism

Higher education institutions have been challenged with uncovering alternative revenue

funding to support faculty research, academic programming, and services for their students.

From most of the existing literature, these funding sources can be categorized into three groups:

university donors (i.e., alumni/ae, foundation relations, external relations), grants (i.e., federal, state, or private foundations), or government-funded initiatives. Traditionally, the ebbs and flows of donor engagement and capacity funding to higher education institutions change based heavily on the financial markets or the U.S. political landscape. When funding sources reach the higher education institutions, faculty, and staff question the decisions made from the "ivory tower" (i.e., from advancement/development and/or president's offices), challenging the motive of those external relationships without prior consultation to execution on contracts the institution has promised to their funders.

Much of the current literature on discontentment with academic capitalism focuses on faculty relationships with alternative funding from the external sector. This discontent focused on the non-professional school faculty members and their skepticism of engaging corporations, especially in the liberal arts academy. In a study by Taylor et al. (2013), the authors researched humanities departments and the quasi-markets for the need for these degrees. According to their findings,

> We suspect, however, that the likeliest future will be the maintenance of the status quo in which the humanities are gradually de-emphasized in response to quasi-market incentives. As far as this prediction proves accurate, conditions may continue to deteriorate for those working and studying in the humanities. (p. 701)

This research notes that if the humanities sector decreases, there may be fewer "well-rounded" employees. As someone who worked in a career services function within a higher education institution from 2003-2018, I can attest to the frustrations employers express with recent graduates' lack of soft skills while their academic curriculum was shifted to a more challenging skill focus based on their majors. Some higher education institutions have already cut these liberal arts programs from their core class requirements, conceding to external pressures from

future students and their families who do not see the value added to the complete degree

program. On the other side of this discussion, many employers note that soft skill sets from

recent graduates are lacking in the workforce, including skills in problem-solving and

communication (verbal and written).

Academic capitalism can also take on a different meaning, as outlined in Bullard's (2007)

work. Bullard discussed how faculty members believed the existing student body, during their

research, was the consumer of their goods and how faculty members teaching were service

providers.

> Competition and market forces on campus can be seen in recent increases in campus
> outsourcing, student consumerism, rationalization of the curriculum, increases in part-
> time faculty, and the adoption of privatized models of internal financing. Individually,
> this trend manifests in activities such as competition for research and/or training grants,
> patenting, consulting, copyrighting, and test or courseware development. (p. 2)

I have also experienced "students as consumers" in the classroom during my adjunct years from

2002-2017. At times, students try to negotiate their grades with professors who lack clarity on

their points distributions in the syllabus for the course or extra credit opportunities outlined in the

syllabus. These faculty members were challenged by students trying to achieve results different

from what they had earned during the coursework. I have also witnessed some higher education

institutions conforming to this "service provider" mentality. While working at a local nonprofit

professional institution, there was a loosely described "money-back guarantee," whereas if the

career placement office did not place you in a position within your major within six months post-

graduation, you were allowed to come back to the school to take additional classes for free. The

business model behind this "ivory tower" decision has continually raised concerns for faculty,

staff, and significantly higher education scholars. For example, if a graduate from said

institution's medical assisting program did not get placed in a desired role, the student was

allowed to return to school for additional classes in the field of their choice to help upskill them for alternative career pathways. Something to note is that this institution also did not hold liberal arts or core courses as part of its foundational education. These courses are the backbone of a well-rounded transferable skill base for all future leaders and are also severely lacking in today's workforce, as outlined above.

Students have also felt academic capitalism during the recruitment process in higher education. Many higher education institutions have created capital-building campaigns to develop new structures on campus to attract students. These new facilities include rock-climbing walls, virtual reality labs, and high-end dorm rooms. Many institutions believe that if a student is on the fence about committing to their institution, during the campus tour, they will convince them to commit to their institution based on the campus environment. This allure of a campus environment was tested during COVID-19 when campuses were shut down, and many relied on virtual campus tours to recruit students, some with much success that is still being utilized today to allow access for non-resident students to view the campus affordable online. In McNay's (2021) study of U.K. higher education, they note "the inequalities of student recruitment in the distribution of power and the influences of policy and processes of decision-making, consequently in grading and funding" (p. 2). This process is widening the gap for social justice in academia. All students deserve the same opportunities the institution offers, regardless of their payment status. Professionally, the flashiness of institutions creating additional building structures while the public discourse is still discussing the unattainability of a college education for future students is, in my opinion, in poor taste. However, suppose a private donor wanted to donate $3M to a university to set up a virtual reality lab. In that case, communication must be

constant with the current student body, future students, and their families on the campus tour. Note, "No, your future tuition dollars are not paying for this space – the funding was donated."

Academic researchers have also expressed their disdain for academic capitalism in both research and teaching pedagogy stance. Faculty members have experienced internal institutional pressure to support the constant churn of published research while abiding by the funding of promissory notes through grants and donor relations. Gonzalez (2014) authored a study on faculty agencies in teaching, research, and administration regarding the dangers of college rankings based on university behaviors. Their findings indicate that culture and fiscal perspective drive faculty agencies for cultural influences within institutions. When future professors start their careers, they are educated in their doctoral program on their subject matter and research abilities. They are not trained in the management techniques they may need as department chairs, nor can they fundraise for grants and external donor relations. However, faculty's pressures to be excellent at teaching, research, service, and fundraising have drastically increased in recent years. This is another demonstration of how academic capitalism is changing the hiring processes for search committees for professors within higher education and how current faculty feel less agency to speak up when they lack these skill sets.

Much of the reviewed academic capitalism literature was related to faculty pay and the intersection with gender identities. In research by Johnson and Taylor (2018), they found while currently in the academy, male faculty obtain more excellent academic capitalism than their female colleagues, "the results demonstrated that the percentage of the faculty who were female had a significant impact on the salaries of women as they entered academe as assistant professors, (compared to their male colleagues)" (p. 32). Females have also been known for not negotiating their salaries as often as their male counterparts applying for the same roles. Females

tend to lack confidence in their negotiation skills. Many often have preconceived notions that salaries are set and do not try or ask for additional compensation, time off, monetary increases, or benefits. Many institutions have started the practice of equity reviews of faculty salaries to help minimize the gaps in faculty salaries based on gender and race, rather than solely awarding higher salaries on merit, and established cultural norms (i.e., grants and donations raised to the institutions). Some research supports the correlation between awarding grants based on gender. Bedi et al. (2012) studied male and female grants awarded by Wellcome Trust in the United Kingdom. In their finding, "Our analysis shows that women received smaller grants from the Wellcome Trust, on average, than did men during this period." (However), "although fewer women apply for grants than to be expected. Thus, the explanation for the difference in amounts awarded to people is that women are systematically less ambitious in the funding requested in their grant applications" (p. 474). This is a systemic gender inequality that is found in all sectors of the world. Women lack understanding and definitions of their worth, their knowledge, and, in this instance, their ability to seek funding for their research areas of interest. Although this study does not focus on race, the inequality between White and Non-White researchers also needs a gap analysis that should be researched further based on previously reviewed literature on the promotions of non-white faculty and staff in higher education.

There is also a challenge for faculty around the intellectual property of the knowledge they create and how they are compensated for it. In a study by Pusser et al. (2006), intellectual property challenges have been researched at public and private higher education institutions.

> Public institutions are more likely than private ones to take equity positions in faculty intellectual property, even if that means circumventing state law or working to change state law to allow such practices. Public institutions may become more entrepreneurial than private institutions to keep up. (p. 770)

I have observed this challenge myself within a higher education institution. A nonprofit foundation wanted a higher education institution to develop a training program for their nonprofit. This nonprofit is also a donor to higher education institutions. The nonprofit requested a traditional "train the trainer" model, which is against university policy as it violated the university's institutional property policy of the university's faculty handbook, which the nonprofit donor did not understand. The general council or provost office often supports the institution's intellectual property over their external partners' request for otherwise. Still, this situation was a "let it go" as the donor's request for the train-the-trainer model was fulfilled.

At many institutions, it is an unwritten rule that faculty members have "side hustle" positions working as consultants where they are paid significant amounts for their services externally. This consulting work is supplemental income for professors, and many flex their institutional hours to work on these external projects. In this justification, the line gets blurred when faculty members receive leads for these projects while on university time. Are these projects considered missed opportunities for university funding? Do the universities have offices to help navigate these external funding opportunities for the faculty members conducting research, consulting, and working on external training programs outside university walls? A study by Mello et al. (2018) examined administrators at U.S. medical schools and schools of public health. They explored these consulting projects for faculty members and their impact on the institution. As part of their findings,

> Many institutional administrators articulated conflicting views regarding whether universities should regulate this area. Many characterized consulting contracts as "private" and outside the institution's purview yet recognized that they can implicate the university's interests in numerous important ways. This dissonance may reflect more than reluctance to intrude into faculty members' "private time," which could affect schools' ability to attract and retain top faculty. It may also spring from worries that reviewing

> consulting contracts could make the university vulnerable to lawsuits relating to those agreements. (p. 10)

These challenges are not isolated from a consulting project for external audiences. Still, they are also related to volunteer time and university services requirements that faculty members participate in as part of their agreement with the institutions. Many faculty members define "services" as a non-paid activity to the faculty member. Still, again, these lines are very gray at many institutions and need to be explored further to protect the faculty's rights and time, along with the institution's positionality on these subjects. In research by Gonzales (2014), "Similarly, there is no recognition for faculty whose andragogy advances civic service, critical thinking, or learning outcomes, overall" (p. 306), noting while faculty contribute more than monetarily to their institutions, they are not rewarded in the same way as those who contribute to the bottom line of an institution. This research indicates that the advancement of staff members or deans with fundraising skills and responsibilities may be compensated more than faculty who are awarded research grants or globally recognized for their scholarship contribution, all while still allowing for free marketing and accolades for the institution.

University Administration's Intersection with Academic Capitalism

Academic capitalism is wider than just faculty in higher education, as the administration and staff have also had challenges in this space. Much research has been conducted on how presidents' pay in higher education is connected, or not connected, to their performance. Performance can be defined as management of the institution, alumni and donor engagement, and fundraising capacities, just to name a few. Research by Yeung et al. (2018) indicates there is no correlation between the salary pay increases in private institution presidents and public institution presidents, which I question and want to explore their findings further. As noted in

Hackett (2014), "as the academic enterprise becomes increasingly dependent on allocations of capital from without and on the accumulation of capital within, it cedes freedom, purpose, and the ability to act as an independent moral force in society" (p. 637).

Interestingly, this article notes that while presidents may or may not have increased their pay, regardless of performance, higher education institutions still struggle to justify their financials and public perception. There has been much research on the president's pay related to academic capitalism. As noted by Cheng (2014), their research centers on how running a university are remarkably like running a corporation. Many current university presidents are now recruited from external corporate organizations or have an external background rather than traditional Ph.D. or teaching backgrounds.

In contrast, they would be recruited for positions from the academy. Because of this shift in hiring practices, the compensation for university presidents has shifted to allow for bonuses. Cheng (2014) also noted that their research "Built upon the findings of no statistically significant association with performance and presidential pay in public universities" (p. 597). Cheng's paper supports that presidents' pay is more bureaucratic and independent of performance.

There is also a notion that the "ivory tower" profits from academic capitalism more than the faculty/staff required to complete the work of the external partnership agreement with extraordinarily little compensation. Much of the higher education faculty and some staff lack knowledge of how these external partnerships are created and executed for the university's greater good. The motivation behind developing successful external partnerships from top-down institutional-wide initiatives within higher education has sometimes been questioned. Yueing et al. (2018) research described the motivation states for higher education presidents. Their study states, "A pay-for-performance relationship between compensation and improved performance

may justify the handsome rewards earned by presidents of higher education institutions" (p. 2). Once this information is posted on *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* website annually, university staff and faculty question how those compensation and bonuses are designed and administered.

Higher education institution staff have shared their lack of support for academic capitalism. During a town hall meeting for faculty and staff hosted at a higher education institution, I observed staff members publicly acknowledging they would not like to discuss external engagement to support university programming as there is no place for this type of funding on their campus. This same conversation happens nationally on liberal arts campuses partly because their experience with external relationships has not always been positive. Many liberal arts schools have found it challenging to work with external partners as their past experiences with colleagues and students for research or projects may have been influenced negatively by these external partnerships. Liberal arts colleges have also seen a drop in enrollment as many future students and families seek career-connected degree programs to yield a higher rate of return on their investment in career outcomes. Osley-Thomas (2020) cited, "Results show that liberal arts departments have a lower failure rate than practical arts departments and that universities are more likely to close low enrollment engineering programs than to close low-enrollment language programs" (p. 213). This is partly due to a university's expense in running an engineering program vs. a liberal art one. This also highlights the additional pressure on the admissions staff within their fields to perform at a higher matriculation rate than their counterparts within paraprofessional colleges due to greater enrollment and potential dropout rates of these students.

University Students and Academic Capitalism

Through faculty conversations, students have also expressed concern about how academic capitalism can affect their experiences on campus. Higher education costs are still a trigger point for families and students not in the top percentage of their peers to receive scholarship funding. Schulze-Cleven et al. (2017) research stated,

> As the numbers of students and faculty have ballooned, financial and competitive pressures have followed. From South Africa to the United Kingdom, students and graduates wrestle with rising tuition costs and educational loans, frequently taking their protests to the streets. At the same time, many higher education institutions struggle to keep their budgets balanced, and from Latin America to the United States, for-profit providers have entered the sector, often selling programs of dubious quality for high fees. (p. 796)

This research demonstrated that the budget and fiscal challenges felt in the United States are typical to students in all geographic areas.

Graduate students have also expressed their discontent with academic capitalism from an intellectual property perspective based on the graduate research work they complete, much of which is part of their tuition package with the institution. Slaughter et al. (2002) noted,

> Intellectual property rights or profit are most often the point of contention when faculty members talk about how they exchange students with industry in return for resources. This is not surprising; intellectual property and profit are where values and norms that separate academe and industry diverge decisively. (p. 294)

While these graduate students may have felt grateful for the financial resources and experience the institution may have provided them, their actual knowledge creation is not being honored with royalties and is now the property of the institution they work for. I recently heard a story of a soon-to-be U.S. graduate student from China coming to America on a student work visa from a sponsored company in China. The Chinese government honored this graduate student visa as the Chinese company offered free tuition in the United States. As part of the scholarship agreement,

once the international student graduates, they will return to China and work for their companies

for a set number of years. As a former career advisor in the United States, I have a challenge

with this for various reasons. Still, most graduate students from China would be afforded a

different internship or work opportunities in the United States than their classmates due to this

regulation for their student visa.

Graduate students have tried to fight for their rights on campuses to demonstrate the

value-add they bring to their institutions. In a recent article in The New Republic (2021),

graduate students from Columbia University discussed their 20-year fight for unionization.

Nathanson reports,

> In 2014, I watched members of this union deliver a letter to the university president that asked him to voluntarily recognize their union. Now, 3,000 Student members student Workers of Columbia members are out on strike—currently the largest strike in the United States in a year of many. That seven-year interval signifies the glacially paced tug-of-war that has defined the decades-long struggle of graduate employees to unionize. (p. 2)

This fight has been a constant battle for graduate student rights while on campus, and it has no

end in sight.

Student-athletes have also expressed the academic capitalism they bring to their home

institution and why they should receive some of the institutions' profits using their likeness for

gain. This has been a dominating point of contention for student-athletes of color, as well as the

challenges they have faced against their white student-athlete counterparts. Gayles et al. (2018)

research focuses on the exploitation of Black student-athletes, who constitute a large majority of

all National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) athletes. This large majority of student-

athletes who share their talents and abilities with higher education institutions bring in lucrative

financial dollars to the institution. In 2018, when the research was published, students were not

allowed to profit from their likeness as part of the NCAA rules. However, this has recently

changed. Some institutions like Northwestern University and The University of Notre Dame

have looked hard at academic capitalism and what could benefit their student-athletes. Recently,

the NCAA (2021) changed its ruling on student-athletes likeness. According to their new policy

change in a press release,

> This is an important day for college athletes since they can now take advantage of name, image, and likeness opportunities, NCAA President Mark Emmert said. With the variety of state laws adopted across the country, we will continue to work with Congress to develop a solution that will provide clarity on a national level. The current environment — both legal and legislative — prevents us from providing a more permanent solution and the level of detail student-athletes deserve. (p. 1)

I have a general observation note to share to demonstrate how the times on this ruling have

changed. In the fall of 2023, my cousin was recruited as a red-shirted first year football player at

The University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana, a Big 10 University. As part of his player profile

on their student-athletics website, there is a link to click to donate money to the student for

various opportunities. This change is fundamental for student-athletes to be compensated just as

one would want research teaching assistant students to be compensated for their contributions to

society.

I found an interesting article supporting student entrepreneur programs at higher

education institutions. Mars et al. (2008) discussed the skill set those students will have if they

have access to student entrepreneur programs. At Loyola University Chicago, we have a program

called Loyola Limited. Undergraduate students from all majors manage fellow student staff and

make all the executive decisions for small businesses across campus, including a university

hotel, a bar/restaurant in the student union, and concession stands for the athletic arena. This

program is a tremendous skill-set-building program for all students in all majors. Some of the

alumni of this program have also gone on to start small businesses within the campus

community. Mars et al. also stated at the time of their study,

> Although thus far a relatively small number of undergraduate students have access to these opportunities, (their study) suggest that some of those students who do successfully gain access to an array of benefits, thus leading us to refine and recast our reading of the effects of academic capitalism on students. (p. 639)

After further research, I discovered a national organization called the Student Run Business

Association (SRBA). According to their website srbassociation.org (2021), "Founded in 2019,

SRBA represents 2,000+ students in 60+ businesses across a growing number of university-

affiliated organizations around the country (expanding globally)." This organization can help

staff members and students of student-run business organizations (SRBOs) to learn, grow, and

thrive in their discipline of student entrepreneurship.

Overall, there is much to be gained from academic capitalism within the higher education

ecosystem if the relationships are built with clear intent, highly communicated within the

institutions, and constructive in a non-threatening way that all stakeholders feel comfortable with

the change. The literature gaps failed to address this, as the process was unclear. Nor has there

been a "one-size-fits-all" model of external partnership that institutions could adopt for

commonality of language across a higher education institution.

Historical Context on External Partnerships and Higher Education

In the past quarter decade, the conversation of co-creation with external partners centered

around teaching, learning, research, and community has seen many value-adds to higher

education and their industries. These partnerships develop into relationships demonstrating

metrics of true community impact for the residents they serve and the universities they engage

with. As a practitioner-scholar, I have observed and created many external partnerships for

higher education institutions for 20 years. While many of these partnerships have been one-offs or, as I would define it, transactional, I would like to see higher education institutions deepen their partnerships from transactional to transformative. A transformative partnership should be seen as one where the higher education institution is viewed by its external partner as a trusted advisor for knowledge and guidance related to the partnership agreements, but also for their social impact on the community at large. These transformative relationships should be explored throughout many different departments within the higher education institution and the external partner's organization. Deepening these partnerships allows for an opportunity to create new synergies. These new opportunities can develop more outstanding internal collaborations within the higher education institution and a moment for external funding to support the institution while providing resources to its external partners.

Narrowing the focus on external partnerships, I would like to explore how higher education institutions can transform their external partnership from transaction to transformative, with a slant on more significant financial commitment from the corporation to offset tuition costs for students and families. As stated earlier and in research from Leslie et al. (2011), "As tuition increases, parents, students, and politicians are concerned with the rising price of higher education" (p. 616). If tuition costs continue to rise on the backs of students and families, the student will not engage in nor view the value of a higher education degree. This research is also necessary for institutions to sustain their existence in local communities as they are a significant part of many local economies. Colleges and universities are not just for the students but also employ many local community members. Local higher education institutions are a pipeline of the economic engine of many small business owners in college towns. They provide seasonal labor for many local establishments, including local nonprofit organizations, which would not survive

without the student body in their cities. According to new research, the shutdown of higher

education institutions due to the COVID-19 pandemic impacted many college towns, closing

some local small businesses (Sullivan, 2020).

Public and private corporations have collaborated with higher education institutions for

decades in the medical, technology, business, and engineering sectors. Much of the early

literature revolves around external partnerships[1] for R&D purposes. For example,

> The scientific team whose 2005 messenger RNA biology discovery at the University of
> Pennsylvania helped pave the way for the COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer/BioNTech
> and Moderna received their first dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine together on Friday,
> December 18 at Penn, more than 20 years after they began their basic science
> collaboration. (Penn Medicine, 2020)

There has been much public discourse on the COVID-19 vaccine. Still, much of the argument in

2020 when the vaccine was launched is that it was "new research" which was created for

COVID-19 and had not been tested. As the literature demonstrates, the research has been around

for over 15 years and is now used for public safety. This is also a great demonstration of how

corporations, higher education institutions, and the national government can work together for

the greater good of society.

Historically, external partnerships have been established solely within advancement or

development departments at higher education institutions. These external partnerships are

established for various reasons, such as opportunities to improve external workforces. In an

article from Saquilayan et al. (2006)

> Intel Philippines is one of five assembly and test (A/T) manufacturing sites of Intel
> Corporation. Its strategic mission is to be the best high-volume manufacturing site and
> the lowest-cost A/T manufacturing site for Intel. To enable workforce readiness and

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[1] External Partnership: A mutually beneficial relationship formed between a nonprofit or charitable organization and for-profit businesses whose purpose is to pursue a common goal based on the shared values of participating organizations (Ferry, 2020).

increase operational excellence, Intel has made it a priority to provide higher technical education for its engineers in the Philippines. (p. 363)

Executive Education offices within and adjacent to higher education institutions have offered these non-credit programs since the 1980s. In my former Executive Education office, the higher education institution has been offering non-credit programs for over 25 years in various pedagogy styles to align with the needs of external organizations. There is an increasing demand for upskilling the U.S. workforce due to the baby boomer generation retiring in substantial numbers. As corporations find new ways to expand their resources to upskill their global workforce, the increasing demand for short, online, non-credit programming or micro-credentialing has been ideal for busy corporations with agile internal ecosystems.

The marketplace for these partnerships in collaboration with higher education institutions is also changing in various ways. ProEd is a global professional development organization focused on executive education departments. Their website proed.com (2021) states, "ProEd exists to serve the university management, executive, and professional education community." During a 2020 ProEd online seminar, the CEO of a technology company discussed how he is not sending his workforce to degree-bearing programming anymore as they need their staff to quickly upskill their skill sets due to the fast pace and ever-changing technology demands. While this is not news to executive education office leadership, who was in the audience of the online seminar, it would be an interesting conversation to share with higher education institutional leadership who still believe that corporations want to engage with universities for degree-bearing programming. Many corporations have also cut their tuition reimbursement programs and heavily rely on professional development budgets to upskill their workforces. External partnerships with university external relations and executive education offices can teach

professional development programming for their adult learners when they want and customize their curriculum based on the corporation's needs. It is also worth noting that after the civil unrest in 2020, many organizations are working on a human resources audit of their job postings to ensure fair and equitable education requirements in these positions. For example, if a position was slated for a required bachelor's degree, does it need a bachelor's degree, or can an associate degree or work-related experience be equitable?

External partnerships with higher education institutions are standard practices within business schools not just for research purposes but also for teaching capstone projects, onsite learning opportunities for company visits, and internships/apprenticeships. In a partnership outlined by Sanderlin et al. (2015), Boeing explained their collaborative partnerships as follows, "While collaborations between universities and industry can include research, development, and industrial innovation, partnerships to support teaching and learning activities are proliferating and have strong ties to study abroad programs" (p. 2). Higher education institutions have also created external partnership opportunities with government offices, nonprofit organizations, the military, and international higher education institutions globally.

How Successful External Partnerships Are Established

Comevo.com, an online student orientation software company, published an article outlining how higher education institutions partner with external partnerships (Comevo, 2019). Their article notes a few reasons to establish these partnerships, including research opportunities to develop career-ready skills, access to industry resources, and internships and apprenticeships. What is not evident from this article is that the benefits of higher education partnering with corporations are not apparent in this article. Although written by a third-party higher education vendor, the article omits the benefits to the external partners. I view articles like this as showing

how corporations get "in the door" with higher education institutions to sell their product or services once a relationship is established. This would be deemed a transactional relationship, not a genuinely transformative partnership. Many higher education institutions have also published articles on the most successful way to engage with external partnerships. UMASS (2020) published an article on ways universities can identify external alliances. This article's intended audience is external partnerships. It focuses on finding higher education institutions whose mission and vision match the external partners and answering whether the external partner has experience teaching adult learners, whether the university programs are customizable and career-focused, and whether the institution is high quality. While all these points are valid to align the university partner with the external partner, the one I want to focus on is the "adult learner" pedagogy. This is something that many institutions believe they can do because they treat their students like adults, but there is a unique style of teaching to attract external partners to the classroom. The teaching style cannot be a straight lecture, quiz, midterm, homework, and final written into a syllabus, as traditional undergraduate credit-bearing classes are designed. External partners pay a hefty fee to most higher education institutions for training and development, and they want to know they are getting the most for their money. The classroom atmosphere needs to be learning-centered, peer-learning involved, and entertaining. The students must leave with a new toolkit of skills they apply the next day at work. There is no time for long-term learning outcomes to be applied, but quick learning outcomes can be delivered within a few hours. There is typically little to no homework or grades in these programs, but results are heavily based on program evaluations from the student and peer-to-peer conversations post-program. These evaluations are necessary to identify if the learning outcomes agreed upon in the program agreement for the training and development were achieved and are settling in well with

the company. These program evaluations and continuous follow-up with the external partner are

vital to completing the sales process and ensuring constant communication with the external

partner for ongoing programming.

The Network of Academic Corporate Relations Officers (NACRO) has researched best

practices for engaging external partners. According to nacroon.org (2021),

> NACRO is a network of U.S. and international external relations professionals dedicated
> to providing professional development opportunities and sharing best practices that
> enable members to develop and advance comprehensive, mutually beneficial
> relationships with the industry and establish common language and metrics for peer
> comparison. Founded in 2007, NACRO has grown to more than 500 individual members.

NACRO has developed annual surveys and models of external partnership engagement that

higher education institutions can adopt. According to Garber's (2017) article,

> According to annual NACRO member surveys, this is still the most common
> organizational model (NACRO 2016 Benchmarking Survey Results). However, several
> universities have created separate offices with business development staff as they have
> adopted a holistic approach and seek to engage external partners at numerous
> touchpoints. (p. 4)

They are referencing the comprehensive approach I have outlined in transactional relationships.

The only way to develop these successful external partnerships is to have senior leadership

support. As outlined by Garber (2017),

> A critical early step emphasized by several officials interviewed for this project is
> securing a commitment from the highest officers of the university—preferably the
> president and the senior research officer—to announce the initiative to the university
> community and back it up with sustained support and involvement. (p. 9)

Without senior leadership support and financial resources as seed funding by the university,

these programs will fall off the radar when the following higher education crisis arises.

Synergies With External Partners and Higher Education

As demonstrated in some of the literature above, there have been success stories of external partnership engagement with higher education institutions. In a recent Williams (2019) study, their article centered on academic capitalism and women's gender studies. From these findings,

> For women's studies to reclaim the radicality and agency it once possessed, these components must be deconstructed and named for what they are - exclusionary, hegemonic practices that place power in the hands of a few, leaving others to be marginalized, invisible, and devalued in colleges and universities. (p. 7)

This study briefly examines how women and gender studies programs have been viewed in past years. These programs provide significant leadership experiences and knowledge for future women leaders. In 2020, many women left the workforce for various reasons, including lack of support from their employer, challenges balancing work and life, and reflecting on their self-worth during the COVID-19 pandemic. These workforce challenges presented an excellent opportunity for higher education institutions to revive their women and gender studies programs and to partner with corporations to find creative and innovative ways to research the women who left the workforce and identify themes for retaining the women still employed. TransUnion (TU) (2020) announced they strive to be gender-neutral in all their senior leadership positions by 2030. To upskill their current female workforce at TU, they partnered with a Chicago higher education institution to co-create an internal Women in Leadership training program. This program created three leadership and business acumen training modules and three internal case studies centered around TU's business running based on past projects and programs. This training program is set to kick off in February 2022 as an online asynchronous and synchronous program and continues to run globally for the next five years. This program demonstrates the

need for external partnerships and universities to co-design programming centered around past and future knowledge within a particular field. This is a win-win partnership with a transactional and transformative outcome.

Outside of internal training and development of teams at corporations, higher education can partner with external organizations to assist with volunteer programming at universities. Higher education institutions rely on external partners for board members as one of these volunteer opportunities. These boards within higher education institutions can be at a variety of levels. Some boards are programmatic boards that help influence programming and curriculum within departments. Other boards are giving boards, whereas the board members are at the university level of a Board of Trustees or the Dean's level as a Dean's Advisory Board member and have a monetary donation requirement to sit on these boards. How board members are selected has always been a bit ambiguous. Some board members are chosen based on their existing partnerships.

In contrast, other board members are chosen based on their past giving history or their alumni/affinity to the higher education institution. Advancement offices believe that to keep alumni/ae engaged with the institution; they need to keep them involved through three pathways: time (i.e., volunteering), talent (i.e., guest speaking in classrooms), and treasure (i.e., donor relations with an individual level or external relations from their companies). According to Pusser et al. (2006) research,

> Private research universities have significant numbers of governing board members who also sit on external boards of the Fortune 1000. These interlocks offer the possibility for rapid communication of information about business practices and market activity relevant to higher education. (p. 766)

Recently, I talked with the President's office at my former institution. They were excited to learn more about our programming and wanted to share executive education programming and services with their board of trustees. During the conversation, the president's office also admitted there is a territorial conversation between the advancement division and who else at the university would have access to connect with the individuals on the board of trustees. Here is where the silos and bureaucracy within the governance structures of higher education hinder the collaboration process. If advancement genuinely believed keeping alumni/ae and donors engaged through time, talent, and treasure will yield them more funding for the university, why would they discourage internal offices outside of advancement from connecting with current donors for engagement opportunities?

In the 1990s, technical colleges and community colleges, which were setting up apprenticeships, emerged. Many community colleges still have significant partnership agreements with corporations for these opportunities. Driver (1999) outlined what a good partnership for these types of programs would be, including a program out of Owens Community College in Perrysburg, Ohio. Their program was centered around a robotics community college program with impressive results. In a press release from March 2021 (owens.edu),

> Owens Community College has been named a finalist in two categories – Outstanding College/External Partnership and Students Success – for the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) 2021 Awards of Excellence. The national awards recognize exceptional work among the nation's two-year colleges. (p. 1)

Their program has grown significantly with partnerships from their career services and workforce development offices. A remarkably similar program currently exists in the Chicagoland area at the College of DuPage, a local community college, called the Project Hire-Ed Apprenticeship Program. According to their website, cod.edu (2021),

Apprenticeship programs provide hands-on training to an employee while gaining necessary competency. They offer skills in a particular occupation, help connect to a career pathway, and combine on-the-job training with appropriate instruction. It is commonly referred to as an "Earn and Learn" model. Gradually, the apprentice acquires new proficiencies, builds workplace skills, and reaches set milestones. (p. 1)

In 2021, the College of DuPage has committed to this initiative by investing in a new space on campus to help serve more students seeking apprenticeship opportunities and to service the current employer demand. According to Glen Ellyn, IL Patch (patch.com, 2021), at a ribbon cutting ceremony, "Aligned with its exceptional growth and coinciding with the graduation of its first class this spring, College of DuPage's Project Hire-Ed apprenticeship program has moved into a newly renovated space on the College's Glen Ellyn campus" (p. 1). This investment from senior leadership supports the community's needs as well as the staff and faculty's need for support of their programming.

Higher Education Challenges with External Partnership

While many higher education institutions engage with external partnerships at the senior leadership level, once an agreement is created, middle management at both the external partner's organizations and the higher education institution will be the team that executes these agreements. This is important to understand, as in many instances, the allocated resources for these programs are not discussed during the statement of work or agreement process. A good example is when career centers are asked to execute items in the external partnership agreement. Years ago, I was working in a career center when an employer asked us to find the best candidates based on their job postings, and they asked us to fax them the top three resumes for them to interview. As part of this position, the office was called the "job placement center," which was part of the university's process. However, with more research into this topic, and

being young in my career, I came across the National Association of Colleges and Employers

(NACE). Per their website, naceweb.org (2021),

> Established in 1956, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) is a professional association that connects over 13,000 college career services professionals, university relations and recruiting professionals, and the business solution providers that serve this community.
>
> NACE is the leading source of information on the employment of college-educated students, forecasts hiring and trends in the job market, tracks starting salaries, recruiting, and hiring practices, and student attitudes and outcomes, and identifies best practices and benchmarks. (p. 1)

The NACE guidelines have been created so all students have equal access to all job postings sent

to their higher education institution. This institution was doing discriminatory acts against

students who were not allowed to apply to these job postings themselves. It's exceptionally

challenging when certain employers only recruit at certain higher education institutions for

reasons that do not always showcase the curriculum of other higher education institutions or

create equality for their workforce. One time, I was having an exploratory meeting with an

employer to understand why they were not recruiting our accounting students at the institution I

worked for. They said that their company only recruited from the accounting departments where

the head of their accounting firm went to college. On the other side of the "job placement"

argument is when students are given the choice to apply for jobs and then do not show up for

interviews (especially at employers who are highly connected to the university). There is

pressure on the career services office for placement rates as part of university ranking, but at

what cost to the students they serve. When the employers are external university donors or

volunteers on the board of trustees, these highly engaged external audiences believe they have

access to these opportunities for the first pick of students. Still, it is against NACE guidelines and

should not happen this way.

Another way career centers, and the academy have experienced external partnerships is through external partnership-designed work-based learning programs. According to Doherty and Stephens (2020), in an article based in Ireland, "These collaborations offer significant benefits to employers, employees and (higher education institutions). The challenges associated with (work-based learning) place demands on the design of curriculum, pedagogy, and accreditation" (p. 1). The challenge with curriculum and pedagogy is that "the designing and delivering a curriculum for (work-based learning) is challenging for academic practitioners accustomed to the traditional mode of teaching and learning" (p. 331). As mentioned earlier, traditional undergraduate faculty have a distinctive style of pedagogy that is not always transferable to the external sectors of adult learners, both in design and delivery.

The challenge with the accreditation is that many employers will emphasize requiring accreditation college credits for reimbursements of their team, or the university may place accreditation requirements on work-based learning (i.e., internships and apprenticeships). This red tape may discourage employers from participating in these programs with higher education institutions. These challenges can be overcome by employers and higher education institutions when conversations are conducted before the external partnership agreement or being frank, creating a partnership agreement, if not in place, to protect each party's rights and responsibilities in the statement of work.

The most significant question around external partnership is what is in it for the university. Likins (2021) wrote about this in a recent article. They state, "A corporation's purpose is to maximize financial benefit while operating within societal constraints; the university primarily maximizes societal benefits within financial constraints" (p. 1). He also noted in the article the disdain from faculty. In contrast, faculty who are least engaged with external

engagement are the ones who voice their questions about the principles of the partnership. Many faculty members who are least engaged with external partnerships are from non-paraprofessional programming unrelated to business, healthcare, or science. Faculty could view external partnerships as additional experiential learning opportunities within or outside the classroom. Huynh and Klassen (2017) wrote about this concept in their article, which focused on teaching and learning. Per their research, "There is an opportunity for the teaching methods and structure of this program to be applied to other contexts to improve student team learning outcomes and find ways to integrate leadership learning into core technical and design courses" (p. 1). Classroom capstone projects are a fantastic way of engaging corporations who do not have time to analyze a workplace challenge while allowing students the opportunity to gain experience working on real-world examples, helping add to their resume experience post-college. These types of capstone projects are an excellent substitute for students who cannot afford to do an internship due to financial obligations at home where they need to continue to work while going to school and do not have enough hours in the day to also add in a mandatory internship requirement set by university policy.

U.S. Government Support of Higher Education and External Partnerships

Government support for higher education and external partnerships has always been available. According to stateuniversity.com (2021),

> The Morrill Act of 1862 strengthened the budding network of state universities by granting public lands (or the equivalent in script) to every state for "the endowment … and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be … to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts … to promote the … education of the industrial classes. (p. 1)

These industrial classes would turn into career-readiness programming at technical and community colleges.

Given the economic changes and student needs, the National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education (2008) created a special report outlining the changes that higher education should adopt to create more extraordinary partnerships for public purposes. Per their recommendations, the one related to external engagement states,

> to provide graduates and the nation at large with the skills needed to be effective in a global, increasingly competitive economy, in which corporations reach across nations and geographical divides in search of new markets, more efficient production, and less costly labor. (p. 2)

This report aligned with O'Connell's (2010) study on the turning point for external engagement in higher education. He notes that the economic downturn of 2008 can be used as an opportunity for higher education to have more significant synergies with external partners. "Such public-private partnership for progress is essential in this severe economic crisis to achieve national consensus goals and progress" (p. 1). In 2008, President Obama and Congress met to discuss how these partnerships are necessary.

In November 2009, the Goldman Sachs Foundation started the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses (10KSB) program, which was a free educational program hosted by community colleges all over the nation for small business owners in the U.S. to teach business acumen education to help elevate their small businesses to the next level of success. Babson College developed the curriculum in partnership with the Goldman Sachs Foundation and local state and city government offices that oversee the community college systems. The program is based on the train-the-trainer model, where each local community college is trained nationwide to ensure that the quality of learning in Illinois is the same as in Florida. My position in this program is that I was the national alumni manager and Chicagoland business development staff member for this program from 2015 to 2017. While this program was a success for small

business owners, it was not without criticism from the national rhetoric of Goldman Sachs, which had a hand in the economic housing crisis in 2008.

Nonetheless, this program, which still exists in the U.S. and the U.K. and has expanded to France, demonstrated the power of tight higher education, local government, and external partnerships. Even after the global COVID-19 pandemic, small business owners have been hit the hardest in many communities. The 10KSB program is still running online and servicing the needs of the small business owner scholars. I would consider this program a successful external partnership model for higher education; however, it is transactional and not transformative. This model does not engage with the students within the community college system, only the community at large.

Student affairs offices, not just external relations in higher education, can also benefit from government and external partnerships. Schroeder (1999) published an article on higher education collaborations and partnerships. In their article, they discussed ways collaborations can benefit student affairs offices. "Collaborative partnerships between student affairs educators and local business leaders, municipal government officials and state agencies (i.e., Liquor Control Board and Public Health), have produced "university-community summits" to address major problems associated with binge drinking by college students" (p. 48). This partnership could have involved external engagement through nonprofits like M.A.D.D. (Mothers Against Drunk Driving – national organization) and S.A.D.D. (Students Against Drunk Driving – student organizations) will also assist with educational programming and sponsorship of these programs. However, the article does not address any external partnership to assist with these programs.

What was once known as business ethics programming in higher education has morphed into one of the newest college majors with a great definition between government, higher

education, and the external sector called corporate and social responsibility (CSR) programming.

CSR programming is a topic that intersects with all majors within the university, including risk

management, environmental sustainability, public health, and social inequalities of the

community in education, social work, and public health. The recent COVID-19 pandemic

highlighted many of these inequalities, and CSR programs and researchers have explored them

through scholarship. Jongbloed et al. (2008) explore this topic,

> In a broader sense, CSR may be understood as the need for organizations to consider the good of the wider communities, local and global, within which they function regarding their business's economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic impact. In higher education, CSR, amongst other things, relates to universities contributing to solving important problems faced by our society—problems that call for innovation of various kinds: social, economic, and cultural. (pp. 318-319)

The CSR program at Loyola University Chicago, through the Baumhart Center for Social

Enterprise and Responsibility, has designed a curriculum for teaching student and external

audiences the importance of intersecting government, nonprofits, external engagement, and

higher education. According to their website, luc.edu/baumhartcenter.edu (2021), "The Center

was established through an anonymous $5 million gift to build on the vision of Loyola's longest-

serving President, Raymond Baumhart, and his groundbreaking 1968 book *An Honest Profit*" (p.

1). They offer programs, many free of charge, supported by private donor philanthropic gifts.

These private donor gifts are individual donor gifts and foundational support, offsetting the vital

work the center is doing for the university. The Baumhart Center for Social Enterprise and

Responsibility demonstrates its interdisciplinary approach to education across campus while

setting the foundation for transformative relationships with donors and external clients of their

programming.

There is much to be gained by external partnerships with higher education institutions. However, moving the needle on how to do this effectively where both parties see a win-win in the relationship is challenging. Especially with the "great resignation" upon the workforce, many contacts, both within the institution and externally, have changed. Relationship building is challenging and takes time. Once you have cultivated a relationship with a specific organization, and then your contact leaves their position, the relationship-building cultivation cycle is often back to square one. The existing literature does not address how to continue the cultivation cycle from transactional to transformative partnerships. The literature also does not address how to identify when there is a point in the relationship that it is mutually beneficial to part ways with an external partner. Often, external partnerships end because either the funding has dried up, the organization's interest has shifted to match cultural trends or the geopolitical landscape, or the point of contact is no longer with the organization. Defining how to continuously cultivate external partnership relationships will be crucial to longevity for higher education institutions and needs further research.

Recent Organizational Change Management in Higher Education

The landscape of future learners' wants and needs is continuously changing. While many future students want to upskill their current skill sets, time and affordability still play a crucial role in their decision-making process. The conversation about stackable credentials of miniature non-credit courses will allow students the flexibility to obtain the knowledge they are seeking when they have the time and affordability to do so. However, many traditional higher education institutions do not have the agility or adaptability in their current governance structures to make this happen, to the detriment of losing future students and potentially closing their doors. Many years ago, I was a staff and faculty member at a local nonprofit four-year institution in Chicago. I

was honored to be a part of an internal higher education management program for staff and faculty. During this program, the college president, Michael Viollt, asked the program participants to read the book, "*Differentiate or Die: survival in our era of killer competition*" by Trout and Rivkin (2008). This book focused on how management within all sectors needed to keep their eye on the future, learn from the past, and adapt to the ever-changing marketplace of their consumers. This was a powerful lesson, and I am grateful I learned it early in my career as a practitioner researcher in higher education. Higher education has transformed into a service-provider entity, which, for many traditionalists of academia and research, is like swimming against the current, upon which many governance structures and systems have been built within the academy.

Analyzing how academic capitalism intersects with external partnerships, I would be remiss not to review how organizational change management theories and past literature have helped or hindered this evolution. Organizational change is challenging for all industries, especially for higher education. Kotter's (2007) work has been applied to organizational change management practice through his theories in many external settings. Kotter's analysis is based on the six most prominent mistakes organizations make when changes happen. One of the mistakes is not creating enough sense of urgency for the change. "Transformations often begin, and begin well, when an organization has a new head who is a good leader and sees the need for a major change" (p. 2). Another mistake is when there is a lack of vision and communication for the change from senior management, "in more successful transformation efforts, executives use all existing communication channels to broadcast the vision" (p. 5). His work outlines many more changes that can all be applied to higher education institutions when significant changes will affect their internal and external stakeholders. In recent years, a new provost was hired to work at

my former institution. The new provost had a vision for the university, with guiding principles

from his former institution. The provost started in January 2020, three months before the global

COVID-19 pandemic. Our recent history has shown that the COVID-19 pandemic affected all

industries, and higher education was not immune to this volatility. While the provost was only in

office for 18 months (due to an unexplained and abrupt leave from their post), they created much

change within the university, including, but not limited to, consolidation of departments,

termination of deans, budgetary freezes, hiring freezes, pushing for on-campus classes (even

when the COVID-19 pandemic was still raging), and the creation of a new department which

was a duplication of resources that already existed at the university. While some of these changes

resulted from the institution's budgetary concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic, all these

internal and external changes during the COVID-19 pandemic caused much anxiety within the

institution. When significant changes are enforced, the aftermath of poor communication with

your internal and external stakeholders can be irreversible, including the current mass exodus of

staff and faculty members at my former higher education institution. During change, senior

leadership needs to have a plan for execution (or the simple communication of the unknown), a

continuous communication strategy, and ample ways employees can ask questions to senior

leadership without fearing retaliation.

Higher education institutions pride themselves on traditions and less on innovation.

Traditions can also be translated as, "This is how we have always done it." Another factor that is

evident in Kezar and Eckel's (2002) research is "that change, especially major change, is not

likely to happen quickly; it takes time" (p. 299). One recent global change that directly affected

higher education was curriculum delivery due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many traditional

brick-and-mortar institutions were hesitant to change to online modalities of curriculum for their

students for a few reasons, including lack of technology support, inability to pivot their content for an online deliverable, and challenges for faculty to modify their pedagogy for online student engagement, just to name a few. All these challenges, or some might say excuses, are derived from the place of fear of change. The day before the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown of the Chicagoland area, my ELPS 459 Org and Gov course had a guest speaker who was a VP from the University of Chicago. When I asked her how prepared the University of Chicago would be if Illinois was forced into lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she said the University of Chicago is unprepared for online education and currently does not offer any online classes. They pride themselves on smaller class sizes, like fireside chat conversations (ELPS 459 Lecture, March 2020). Knowing the cost of tuition for the students and that there was no contingency plan for online education, even on a snowy day in Chicago, was a key indicator of how ill-prepared they were when forced to close their doors for in-person classes.

In the wake of the early COVID-19 pandemic, many higher education institutions needed to be nimble in planning everything from curriculum, pedagogy, staffing, student enrollments, funding from external stakeholders like foundations, alumni giving, external federal and state funds, and programming. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the lack of agility within higher education. As outlined in Dennis' (2021) article, a more prominent spotlight on higher education concerning the public perception of higher education, the ample alternative education sources outside of the institutions, and the changing demographics of full-pay international students entering the U.S. was on full display. These challenges were amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic as higher education had not resolved an alternative way of collecting funding if one or all these funding channels were eliminated. Higher education is more of a reactive industry than a proactive industry, as the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted. Even in December 2021,

institutions were still struggling with change management communication to handle the waves of

the COVID-19 pandemic that were still creating havoc globally, nearly two years after the initial

shutdown. The COVID-19 pandemic higher education challenges also highlight how the lack of

change to meet marketplace demands from future students is a detriment to higher education as

an industry.

In recent literature on change implemented within the higher education sector during the

COVID-19 pandemic, one can argue that often organizational changes should lead to continuous

improvement and not just a flash in the pan of change to solve a problem. Kumar (2020) argues,

> The question is, which of the adopted changes will persist? Which will outlast COVID-19? Put another way, which practices will lose their luster and favor with time? What will constitute the new normal?" These questions are what all higher education institutions should consider when making long-term policies to increase their sustainability for the new normal. (p. 38)

The new normal practices are still trying to be implemented in higher education. From the

modalities of curriculum and faculty and staff working in remote positions to continuing to offer

online student activities programming, higher education institutions still have not found a way to

meet the external market demand for these changes that many became accustomed to during the

pandemic. As a higher education practitioner, I have an observation note to demonstrate why

change is necessary in higher education today in a post-COVID-19 pandemic world. From a

student perspective, many institutions were still 100% online in the fall of 2020. Admissions

offices still recruit students from all over the world for their programming. Many of these offices

mentioned that while they are still online for the fall of 2020, they will be back to in-person

programming at some point. Why not keep some of these programs online (or at least some

course sections) to increase the leads and generate more global students? These programs would

not only fill the virtual classroom while meeting the needs of working students who want an

online education but would also bring rich experiences to the classroom from different global

perspectives on how industries work in different regions. Not to mention that higher education

institutions would also be able to recruit global faculty to teach in these programs remotely,

increasing faculty status internationally.

While changes are still an ongoing conversation in higher education and ways to assist

students, faculty, and staff, some changes can be implemented to identify systemic challenges

within the higher education ecosystem. Craig and Cooke (1975) discussed a report on the

advantages of allowing incoming adult students credit for external work experiences. *The*

Newman Report on Higher Education states, "Colleges should consider ways to credit students

who engage in public and social service projects before or during the completion of their former

higher education" (p. 472). Since this article in 1975, this approach for enrolling adult students

has been adopted in higher education. DePaul University in Chicago had a college called the

School for New Learning (SNL), now rebranded as the School of Continuing and Professional

Studies (2021). This program had what I would like to call a bingo card for students to track their

academic progress. This bingo card had "core competencies" where the student would color in

the competency based on either work experiences, transfer credits from former higher education

institutions, or current classes they were enrolled in at DePaul. This competency would be

written up once completed, and an academic advisor would validate if the competency was

completed. Once the bingo card was a "cover all," the student would graduate from SNL. This

format of awarding degrees demonstrated how systems change and change management can be

achieved in academia. I was a professional mentor for a program for a 50-year-old student, and

this program was life-changing for this student who achieved their bachelor's degree after years

of trying to finish their program. It is also important to note that through their experiences in the

SNL program, these students gained the confidence to complete their master's degree at age 60.

Change Management Challenges in Higher Education

As institutions have grown and developed over the years, their skill and adaptability have

been very inadequate compared to other sectors. One primary example would center around

private higher education institutions. Several religious orders that founded many higher

education institutions globally have found it necessary to adapt their leadership model of

administration to accommodate the lack of personnel going into ministry. There was no

succession planning for these institutions when the lack of ministry personnel was available and

prepared to take over for retiring ministry leadership. While bringing in an experienced

layperson to run a religious-affiliated higher education institution may seem like an ideal notion

on paper (with all the external experiences in the private sector), religious and higher education

traditions are very slow to adapt and often face stark criticism.

One critical challenge for higher education institutions is the business model created

within the academy. As much as academics would like to believe the driving force of life within

an institution is knowledge creation, as it might be the catalyst for an institution's framework, the

business model is the driving force that keeps the bloodline alive. Many institutions rely on a

solid business model to keep their operations afloat and, frankly, the doors open. Higher

education has not had the nimblest business financial model. Clevenger and MacGregor (2019)

identify, "This blurriness comes, in part, because higher education's business model is funded by

tuition, government aid, and private support, which includes individuals, foundations, and

corporations" (p. 126). Most higher education internal offices rely on a financial model of a

spend-down budget set by the institution. Often, departments are forced to cut their funding,

some annually, based on institutional need and enrollment numbers. The practice of creating a budget within higher education institutions is constantly in flux and can impact many student-run programs as enrollments change throughout the academic year. This change management model of budgeting is just one micro example of how the lack of communication from senior leadership can impact programming, offices, and, at times, staffing.

McKinsey and Company (2019) created a report on *A Better Way to Lead Large-scale Change,* emphasizing organizational change's soft and hard elements. As noted in their research, "During the trial, we took care to minimize distortions (external initiatives such as operational restructuring, leadership changes, and significant staff turnover) that might disproportionately affect any one group" (p. 5). Their findings show that sound organizations with strong leadership and effective communication with their teams can navigate change better than organizations without a set foundation. "In this way, putting equal emphasis on the performance and health elements of leading organizational change doesn't just improve the odds of success; it improves the lives of employees, builds an organization's resilience, and creates a pro-change mindset" (p. 11). One of the highlights of a recent report that resonated with me was the staff turnover. On insidehighered.com (2021),

> Anthony Klotz, an organizational psychologist at Texas A&M University who coined the term "the Great Resignation," observes, "During the COVID-19 pandemic, because there was a lot of death and illness and lockdowns, we had the time and the motivation to sit back and say, 'Do I like the trajectory of my life? Am I pursuing a life that brings me well-being?'" which has been widely documented. (p. 1)

I have observed this for myself for the past two years. Nationally, higher education professionals who have devoted the past two decades of their lives to the Academy are leaving the industry to move on to the private and nonprofit sectors, where their skills are easily transferable. They believe the external sector has more autonomy for different modalities of workplace norms,

including, but not limited to, remote work, support for diversity, equity and inclusion conversations, more career advancement opportunities, and higher pay. Faculty and staff tend to enter the higher education industry for the work/life balance. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that work/life balance is entirely unachievable with the demands of an ever-changing industry.

There are also external forces that hinder change within higher education. A primary source of funding within higher education institutions is the reliance on government funding. In the past few decades, government funding has been volatile. In recent memory, since 2007, funding has been in a constant state of decrease in higher education institutions. Colleges and universities have had to lobby on Capitol Hill for more funding for their states and institutions to support programs like Pell Grants and additional scholarship support for their changing demographics of students. In Illinois, many state-funded institutions were set to close after a "perfect storm" of an ongoing economic downturn due to the housing market crash in 2008 and the State of Illinois budget in FY17 not being passed under Governor Rauner's administration. In a recent Harvard Business Review article, Ostroff (2020) stated that winning over stakeholders within government (both internal and external) is essential to their livelihood, mainly centering the conversation around government-funded higher education institutions.

Lack of Innovation with Resistance to Change

Historically, higher education has not been the nimblest industry. The academy prides itself on traditions centered around faculty profiles, student engagement, and research. Academic leadership believes these traditions encourage future students to apply to their institution. On the contrary, future students apply to their institution of first choice for various reasons. According to an Eduventures Research (2020) study, the top three reasons students choose a higher

education institution are academic programming (i.e., majors offered in their discipline), affordability, and career preparation. Future students and their families are very savvy and do not want to go into debt over their student's college education. Higher education institutions need to be mindful of how their current students choose their institution and adapt their marketing toward the new consumers of their products. One way to adapt is to innovate their practices within the academy.

Adapting to innovative processes will help foster new ways of thinking that are not in the cultural norms of higher education. Innovation takes "out of the box" thinking that is not part of the traditional terminology of the academy. Yes, knowledge creation, but programmatic, systems thinking, and organizational change management innovation are not norms. Supported by research by Bovill et al. (2016), "Custom and common practices alongside the perceived personal and institutional risks of redefining traditional staff-student roles and relationships inform the challenges staff and students experience in co-creating learning and teaching" (p. 199). Institutional risk is the key to the concept of innovation in higher education. Few institutions have a dedicated administrator overseeing holistic institutional risk, as most risk decisions fall under the chief financial officer or the general counsel's office. Higher education tends to be risk-averse unless the conversation revolves around the financial implications of the institution or risks involving contracts and grants. More institution-wide risks are parceled around an institution's campus, including but not limited to student safety and wellness, academic integrity, Title IX, and human resources.

The concept of higher education being a risk-averse industry is essential as it stifles innovation and change management throughout the campus. A few years back, the provost's

office announced an Academic Innovation Fund at my previous institution. According to

luc.edu/academicaffairs/ (2021),

> One way of achieving this is to leverage existing university resources to support innovation, particularly new, innovative academic programs that are well-aligned with the higher education market and likely to increase enrollment streams and add net revenue to academic units. To achieve this goal, the university has formed a team to evaluate proposals for academic innovation and recommend those that would benefit from start-up funds to launch the initiatives. (p. 1)

While, in theory, this program on paper is an excellent concept to stimulate innovation around

campus, after reading the fine print, I realized that it has a lot of strings attached. The fund is

established as seed funding, anticipating the university recouping its initial funds a few years into

the newly established innovative idea. I have personally been through a few of these program

proposals for funding, and they were time-consuming and challenging, but they never amounted

to anything. For example, funding was approved in the fall of 2019 to help promote credit and

non-credit programming in the IT space. This program was an innovative, interdisciplinary

concept between the School for Continuing and Professional Studies, the School of Business,

and the School of Arts and Sciences. This funding was used for external marketing and hiring a

business development director. In the spring of 2020, the funding was put on pause due to

priority changes regarding the COVID-19 pandemic concerns of the university. Once the

university settled down a bit in the summer of 2021, the funding for this project was terminated

indefinitely. This lack of fulfillment of the university for staff and faculty who dedicated time

and resources to building programming just stifles the desire to develop new, innovative

programming, thus highlighting why change management is challenging in higher education

institutions.

External Support of Change Management

Change management is not a new concept for corporations; the economic demand for new products and services constantly changes. Corporations need to continually evolve to meet the demands of their customers. Within higher education, the industry does not view its stakeholders (i.e., students, alumni, donors, and external partners) as customers and may explain the adverse support for change. Parker and Wall (1998) outline the support for change management in the external sector in an article. "At Nissan, for instance, supervisors are expected to ensure that all operators comply with the work processes laid out in manuals. Changes to procedures can only be implemented after extensive discussion and still need to be sanctioned by management" (p. 12). This project at Nissan also supports the concept that effective communication both before, during, and after the change is vital to getting internal buy-in for any changes related to the workforce's quality of life.

What also supports the need for change management is the turnover in staff at the management level from the baby boomer generation through the millennial generation. In research from Media Update.co.za (2020), millennials and Gen Z are highly confident in their ability to adapt to change. "This generation is three times more likely to change jobs than boomers, meaning they are not afraid of new challenges or learning new skills. This makes it easier for them to adapt to continuously changing industries" (p. 2). This critical asset for organizations to understand is that if a younger generation is now managing their workforce, the risk for implementing recent changes is relatively low as these are very adaptable generations to change. Corporations have recognized this as a pivotal asset to their workforce and are upskilling their teams with management skills to prepare the next generation of leaders.

Internationally, the external sector finds that staff members are more productive when changes are communicated consistently. Allen and Fifield (1999) researched corporations in the United Kingdom for their article. They researched a concept called Business Process Re-Engineering (BPR) that many corporations use and can be adapted to higher education institutions. BPR was developed in the U.S. for the tech sector in the 1990s. They found that "These long-standing companies have a 'sense of community: if the community 'dies' then so does the business. People are seen as more important than production" (p.6). Without a sound, keen sense of community, the change management project will not thrive, no matter what top-down initiatives are established. When organizational morale is low, productivity is low. Once, I worked at a higher education institution. During an all-staff meeting of over 100 colleagues on a Monday morning, the AVP announced to the division that staff layoffs were inevitable and staff would be notified by the end of the week. The morale in the office was abysmal before the meeting, as institutional-wide cuts had been hitting other departments for years. During this staff meeting, fear and anxiety ramped up within the department. The university decided not to replace any open positions, and any staff member resigning due to other external job opportunities would not be replaced. The job cuts were low, as only two staff members were let go. This lack of clear communication due to a change within an organization is detrimental to the culture of a workforce.

Support for Change Within Higher Education

Change management does not have a "one size fits all" model that can be adapted to all environments. Brown (2013) discussed the empirical approach to change management within higher education. He outlines how top-down change management has more effective changes than bottom-up influences. "The benefits of top-down include efficient time and resource

management and tight control over project outputs. However, top-down management does not guarantee adequate control over outcomes" (p. 89).

Where there is resistance to change from the bottom-up, it is mostly around time and financial resources dedicated to the changes the higher education institutions want to create. This is like corporate America wishing to develop more internal and external programming within the diversity, equity, and inclusion space. If no dedicated funding, staffing, or top-down initiatives are created to support these changes, the initiative will not take priority within the organization. If this is not a strategic priority of the corporation, adding these job duties and responsibilities to other staff members who already have a full plate will lead to hatred within the organization's culture. Changes with large initiatives need to be communicated effectively, and dedicated resources and senior leadership support for practical changes to be implemented.

There is literature that supports external support for change management. Frølund et al. (2018) wrote a piece on how corporations can develop partnerships with higher education. In the article, the authors state,

> These relationships have long been a mainstay of external research and development (R&D) — from creating the knowledge foundations for the next generation of solutions to serving as an extended "workbench" to solve short-term, incremental problems, to providing a flow of newly minted talent. (p. 71)

The literature implies a win-win for both industries when the partnerships are created. However, "Given both the promise and the challenge of university-industry interactions today, it's important to explore the factors that make such collaborations successful" (p. 72). A six-step approach is outlined in the article on how higher education institutions can engage with corporations. However, what is lacking from this article is the external partner's engagement. In the partnerships I engage with in Executive Education, there needs to be a win-win for both the

university and the corporation. Most of the work is transactional as we provide training and development to corporations for a fee, which is a win-win, but some of the partnerships end there and are considered one-off transactions.

What if a change management model was applied to a proven profitable department to start looking at the external partnership holistically and not just measure departmental successes on profits? What if the department was measured on profitability and the social impact of its external partners? Even with more mounting pressures from faculty to be paid more for the teaching, development, and research they are doing for the office, with internal pressures to create more profits for the institution, and external pressures from external clients to keep costs low, what new, innovative thoughts can make this all achievable?

Conclusion

This literature review has been quite insightful. I have learned that many stakeholders, both internal and external to higher education, view academic capitalism differently. When a higher education stakeholder views academic capitalism to their advantage, they highlight that in their research to persuade their case to senior leadership. When academic capitalism is viewed negatively, the stakeholder highlights this, in my professional opinion, to avoid change within their current workload. I recently heard a colleague in higher education say that we (as higher education institutions) leave money on the table all day long due to our internal bureaucracy and red tape that we self-create. This sentiment was very prevalent in the literature I reviewed.

My observations from the literature I reviewed on external partnerships are that there are many stylistic views on how higher education can adopt different external partnerships but lack tangible literature on a common language or model with success stories or opportunities lost. Another themed observation is that government and corporations support engagement with

higher education for financial and research gain but that higher education institutions are more averse to these projects for a variety of reasons, mostly lacking the ability to coordinate efforts across the different departments at the institution or the lack of dedicated staff and financial resources to execute these projects.

In reviewing the literature on change management, it was apparent the external sector has a grasp on the ever-changing marketplace and, therefore, can implement change management models of thinking with greater ease. Higher education institutions are still grappling with how to evolve and adapt change management models for their services. Change in higher education is slow, often at a snail's pace. The marketplace sometimes demands fast, innovative changes to attract new students to the academy. Change cannot exist in the workplace without strong leadership and a strong culture.

I am excited to integrate my dissertation research and answer my research question of why and how external partnerships can exist with higher education institutions in a coordinated way. I am eager to continue to obtain new knowledge within the existing literature on academic capitalism, external partnerships, and organizational change management. My goal is that my dissertation research will be an intersection of education and business scholarship, clearly defining me as a researcher-practitioner in higher education.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Abstract

This mixed-method study aims to investigate, understand, and define the relationships between higher education institutions and external partners. This study focuses on what currently exists within the higher education ecosystem for engaging external audiences and is forward-thinking to imagine how these relationships can develop and evolve. This study is divided into two phases. The first phase focuses on a qualitative, thought leadership think tank (i.e., exploratory focus group) to understand how higher education institution professionals view their existing external partnerships and examine internal challenges. Phase two focuses on a qualitative data analysis of an electronic survey based on a video of a newly developed external engagement model for higher education institutions. This study's overarching goal is to test a freshly defined model of external partnership engagement with a shared understanding of each level that can be understood across campus and replicated within different university systems. Each part of the research study is grounded in an exploratory sequential design within a modified model of Lewin's Model of Action Research framework and the practitioner-scholar research framework. This action research plan includes the purpose of the study, methodology, research questions, study participants, and ethical concerns outlined in this chapter.

Purpose of the Study

This mixed-method research study aims to understand the current state of external partnerships and their engagement with higher education institutions. Centering myself as a

central and vital participant in the study as a practitioner-scholar, as highlighted in the

practitioner-scholar framework outlined in Chapter One and utilizing the action research

framework to design the study to test a new model of external engagement, which categorizes

defined levels of external partnerships engagement. When analyzed and tested, the hypothesis is

that if dedicated time, talent, and resources are allocated to this new initiative for a higher

education institution, a new external partner engagement model can be adopted within

institutions to create a stronger forward-facing voice or the greater good of the shared

relationship.

Research Design Summary

The overall research design is an exploratory sequential research design based on the

Lewin Action Research Model outlined in Figure 1. This framework is used to understand what

has been done in the past on a topic, what can be done in the future through experimental testing,

and what needs to be revisited for continuous improvement, all based on a current problem

within a practical sector, in this study - higher education.

Figure 1. Lewin's Action Research Model

Source: Dickens & Watkins: Rethinking Lewin (1999).

Research Study Justification

My justification for this research study, as described by Creswell (2021), focuses on a worldview of pragmatism, "This is an American philosophy focusing on the importance of the research question, collecting multiple forms of data to address the question, and applying the findings in a "real-world" practical way" (p. 10). The mixed method design's purpose is to have one portion of the research influence the second. "We define integrative strategy as a process in which the system of relations within the study is explicated and justified per the research purpose and phenomenon" (Åkerblad et al., 2021). The mixed method survey research design will be an exploratory sequential design. While the qualitative data from the exploratory focus group will influence a newly structured model of external partnerships that will be evaluated by the quantitative survey data to refine the model of the external partnerships, Creswell (2021) seeks to create a cause-and-effect definition design.

Step One: Analyzing, Fact Finding and Reconceptualizing

Identify the Problem

The challenge of defining the relationships higher education has with external partnerships is a political red flag within institutions. Past literature on external collaboration within higher education has shown that it is a very transactional, or one-to-one, relationship. In contrast, the literature focuses on a singular interaction between a higher education institution and one external partner. Higher education professionals and institutions have a tight grip on the external relationships they build. They are very territorial as to who can have the privilege to engage in these relationships. For example, alumni relations within advancement divisions would always like to be the first point of contact for anyone at the institution to reach out to "their alumnus." This is a cultivation tactic to engage the graduate first through alumni relations (i.e.,

attending an event or becoming a volunteer), then encouraging the alumnus to give back financially to the institution through the development side of an advancement division. When I worked in alumni relations, our team was trained by the advancement development fundraisers on identifying if an alumnus could give financially to the institution based on small talk conversation, searching for keywords, or phrasing. If we felt someone could give back financially to the institution, the alumni relations team would introduce them to the development officer. Besides the territorial and political challenges, there are many silos within higher education institutions. Physical locations, campuses, data capture, and information sharing challenges.

From an internal perspective, the culture of higher education is evolving. Still, it needs a fuller understanding of the benefits external relationships can add to the faculty, staff, and student experiences. There is a lack of integration of different offices within higher education, which highlights the current model as inefficient for external partnerships. How can external partnerships within different units of higher education move from transactional to transformative?

Literature Review

As part of the fact-finding investigation of this research study, an extensive literature review was outlined in Chapter Two. What is lacking in the current literature is twofold. First, there are no clear definitions of how higher education institutions categorize their external relationships other than a general cultivation cycle set by each office interacting with external audiences. Once defined, can higher education institutions apply the new model of categorized external partnerships to develop a comprehensive approach to these relationships? The notion of thinking differently about these external relationships has not been shared within higher

education spaces. It would be a change management methodological approach to achieving new strategic goals within an institution. While this is a change management challenge of higher education to strategically collaborate for the greater good of the institution and the external partner, it does not come without territorial discussions on who "owns" the relationships. Ultimately, the intellectual property developed during university time (i.e., cultivating the relations) resides within the higher education institution. These systems thinking changes to the higher education ecosystem will develop more deeply, yielding long-term relationships with the external partner and, ideally, more significant outcomes for both parties.

Research Design

The exploratory sequential design has been chosen as I will analyze data sets that inform the flow of the study. This mixed method uses qualitative and quantitative data for the study design. Creswell (2021) defines mixed-method study research as

> A methodology and method to research in the social, behavioral, and health sciences in which the investigator gathers both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates or combines the two, and then draws inferences (called "meta inferences") from the integration that provides insight beyond what can be learned from the quantitative or quantitative data. (p. 2)

This definition is a guiding principle, slightly modified, for my research study. I will be using a mixed-method approach starting with an exploratory focus group (qualitative research study) with a mixed-method approach of analyzing both open-ended and closed-ended survey questions based on an original model for higher education institutions to categorize and cultivate their external relationships and to design a future model that can be used in future recommended studies. The Phase I qualitative exploratory focus group data will inform the survey questions and model design for the Phase II quantitative survey to be evaluated. No priority is given to the quantitative or qualitative research study questions as they are equally crucial to this action

research study. As a note, as I am also a participant in this research study as a practitioner-scholar, I will also be mixing in my practitioner-scholar voice with 20 years of higher education experience and now my two years of senior executive level nonprofit higher education third party experience in a variety of administrative and faculty roles inside and outside of higher education. These observation notes will be highlighted in Chapter Four.

The Rationale for the Mixed Method Study Design

The justification for using a mixed method design is to allow equal priority on the quantitative and qualitative survey data to help influence the design of a new model for external partnership definitions within higher education institutions. Once defined, ideally, this will allow data to be analyzed in a separate study to explore if a change management framework could be used within higher education to influence institutions to deepen their engagement with their external partners. As a practitioner-scholar researcher, I am a co-researcher with other higher education colleagues to help design a model of external partnership that is good for our communities and the institutions to which we are connected.

Fact Finding: Exploratory focus group: Data Set I

As part of step one of Lewin's Model of Action Research (analyzing, fact-finding, and reconceptualizing), I hosted an exploratory focus group with senior-level higher education administrators to understand the challenges and obstacles higher education institutions face with external partnerships and internal collaborations.
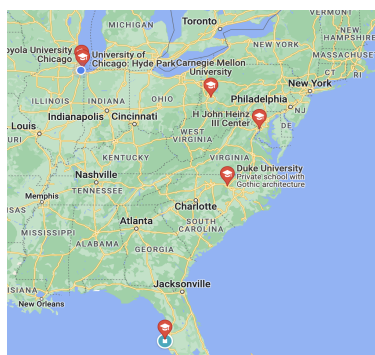
Sample/Participants

For the exploratory focus group participants, I recruited six to eight senior administrators and/or full-time faculty members with 30% or more of their current role in higher education responsible for engaging with external partners. Participants eligible for this study must (a) be a

full-time staff or faculty member, (b) have five or more years of experience, and be at an accredited U.S. higher education institution. Titles of the participants may include dean, senior administrators, professors, career services officers, advancement staff, and university presidents. The primary investigator will hand-select the participants to ensure gender, age, race, and geographic diversity within the exploratory focus group.

Participant Review – Exploratory focus group

As part of this study, participants were selected for an exploratory focus group based on their years of experience as senior leadership within higher education and their current connections to higher education through membership organizations and advisory board participation. The participants' demographics were ten or more years in higher education currently in a senior leadership role; 50% were female, and 50% were male. As for the racial backgrounds of the participants, even with my best efforts, the exploratory focus group was 100% white (which will be interesting to see how the lack of racial diversity plays into future considerations). Geographically, the participants came from east of the Mississippi River within the United States, as seen in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2. Location of Exploratory Focus Group Participants

Note. Google Maps, 2023

Participants came from four-year private, nonprofit higher education institutions in their current roles; however, many participants had other higher education experiences they could draw upon as part of their frame of reference to the exploratory focus group. A frame of reference is defined as "One's frame of reference is the context, viewpoint, or set of presuppositions or evaluative criteria within which a person's perception and thinking seem always to occur; and which constrains selectively the course and outcome of these activities" (Lumen Learning, n.d.).

For the Phase I data set, qualitative exploratory focus group data was collected during a recorded one-hour exploratory focus group session using Zoom, with cameras off and microphones on. There were no name identifiers on the participants, only numbers. The session was recorded with Zoom recording software, and a 14-page Zoom-generated transcript was analyzed. Themes were extrapolated using textual data for themes thematic analysis framework found in The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers (Saldana, 202). Recordings and transcripts from the exploratory focus group were destroyed once the analysis was completed.

Participant Exploratory focus group Questions

Exploratory focus group questions were chosen based on the literature review research and gaps identified with the research. For the qualitative exploratory focus group, I asked the following research questions to the participants to capture the exploratory feedback:

1. As we center this exploratory research on external relationships with Higher Education institutions, how would your current or past institution define external relationships?

2. What percentage of your current daily workload is allocated to external engagement?

3. Can you identify different internal stakeholders that would constitute an external engagement with higher education institutions?

4. What challenges have you had or currently observed internally with external relationships within higher education?

5. How have you participated or observed in collaborating interdisciplinary engagement with external relationships, specifically within higher education spaces?

6. In your experience, was developing an internal collaboration a challenge? Why or why not?

7. Was there an internal SWOT or risk/reward analysis done on external partners you engaged with your current or past higher education institution?

8. Have you participated in or observed clearly defined roles and responsibilities for an external engagement at your current or past institution? Explain.

9. Have you participated in or observed clearly defined "levels of engagement" for external audiences? Explain.

10. What are the root challenges within your current or past institution with external relationships?

Step Two: Planning

Once the exploratory focus group was completed, as part of phase two of Lewin's Model of Action Research (planning), I analyzed the outcomes of the exploratory focus group utilizing thematic analysis and holistic coding to identify significant themes and sub-themes to help frame the foundation of a model of external engagement for higher education institutions to use internally. Through a common language, this model would help address some of the challenges higher education institutions face when working with external partners.

Once the model was created, I developed a quantitative survey to analyze its efficacy using Qualtrics. Here are the questions that were asked during the study:

1) What is your affiliation with your employment with your institution?

2) Please indicate what part of the higher education institute you primarily work for in a full-time capacity.

3) (Two-Part Question)

    ○ How many years have you worked full time in Higher Education?

    ○ What percentage range of time do you spend with external audiences (i.e. stakeholder engagement), to perform your assigned duties/responsibilities at your institution?

4) What is your gender identity?

5) Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be:

6) What is the zip code of your higher education institution? (Note: Remote employees should use their main campus zip code for their answers).

Researcher Note: the following questions relate to the video clip that is linked here: https://youtu.be/tQrKm82-2tw.

7) On a scale of 1-5 (1 lowest and 5 highest), Utilizing the developed "model of external engagement," how well defined do you believe the levels are?

    ○ Level 1: Surface

    ○ Level 2: Moderate

    ○ Level 3: Substantial

    ○ Level 4: Premier

    ○ Level 5: Elite

8) Do you believe this framework of external engagement could be utilized within your institute?

9) Please share with me any additional thoughts you might have about the utilization of this framework and model at your institute.

Step Three: Action (Execution)

After the model was created, it was circulated to higher education listservs and on LinkedIn to secure at least 50 participants nationwide in the study to analyze the model to see if this model is a framework that their institution could adopt and a why or why not.

Recruitment Procedures

To circulate the survey, I created a social media post including the Qualtrics electronic survey link, with a Zoom video embedded in the link, which was shared via electronic flier on social media networks, including Facebook and LinkedIn, for participant awareness. I also contacted my professional networks of ProEd, NACRO, and ACHE (Association for Continuing Higher Education). These three organizations have the market share of working professionals and external partners to fulfill a saturated sample size of participants. One research note: I am excluding part-time/adjunct faculty from this research study, as many have practitioner knowledge and may influence the study results, compared to faculty members with little to no engagement with external partnerships within higher education. Consider including part-time/adjunct faculty in future research when testing the revised Lewin's Model of Action Research of external engagement. Still, justification needs to be considered, researched, and analyzed.

Data Collection

In Phase II of the quantitative research study, I had a recruitment sample size goal of 50 participants. Eligibility for participation in the survey is: (a) full-time faculty or staff member at an accredited U.S. higher education institution, (b) has a portion of their role (e.g., 10% or more) working directly with external partnerships for business purposes.

Participant Demographic Review

The goal for Phase II of the data collection was to obtain 50 completed surveys. Sixty participants completed the study. Of the 60 participants, 40 were full-time staff, eight were full-time faculty, and 12 were "other." Sometimes, these questions are challenging for participants to answer clearly, especially if they have a split position within their higher education institution, which is becoming the norm of a full-time administrative role with teaching or other responsibilities (Hackett et al., 2016). Also, the fault of "Other" not being clearly defined in this study is a misstep of the primary researcher and will be addressed in the reflections section at the end. Please see Figure 3 for a breakdown of participants in the study.

Figure 3. Question 1
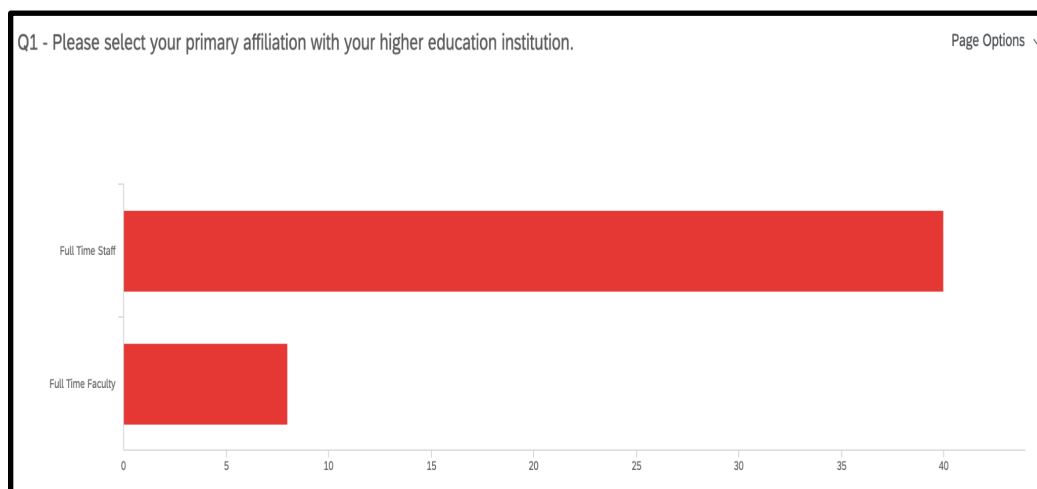
While I am not surprised by the disproportionate number of full-time staff to full-time faculty, as from the research stated in Chapter Two, some faculty members are not supportive of external engagement with their higher education institution or research as they believe there is an alternative motivation to the study sponsored by external audiences, especially corporations.

When exploring which department, divisions, or offices the participants resided in, it was an even split except the President's Office. See Figure 4, the bar graph below for Q2 statistics.

Figure 4. Question 2
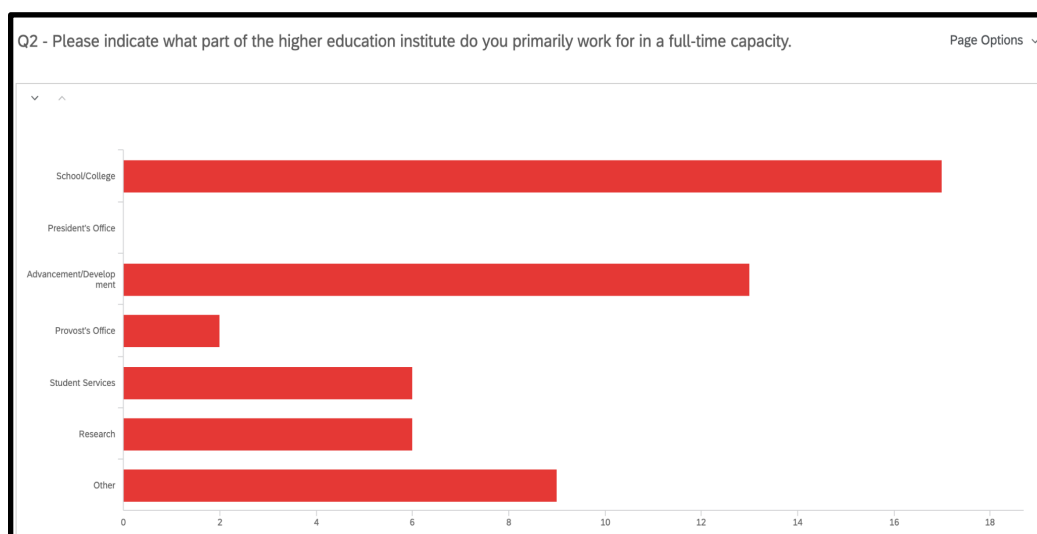
The findings of these results are interesting as many were from schools/colleges, while no one resided within the president's office. From the former literature, I have read and analyzed in Chapter Two, if an external engagement office is not centrally located within the highest point of the institution's leadership, change cannot be enacted for interdisciplinary collaborations without buy-in from senior leadership as outlined in our change management literature (Kezar, 2018). The exploratory focus group supported this past literature, and the current findings also highlight where external relation duties and responsibilities are found within a higher education institution.
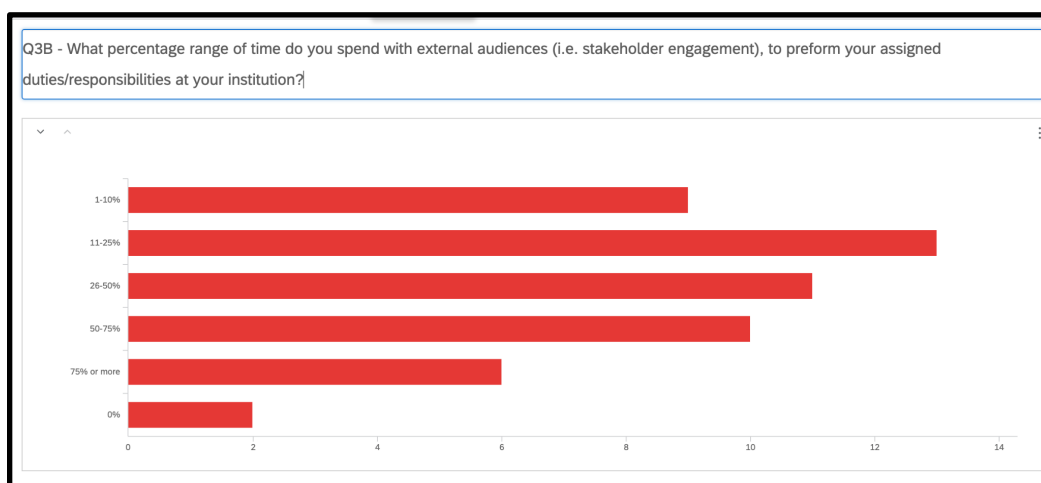
When looking at years of service to higher education, 46 of the participants have worked five or more years within higher education, with 70% working ten or more years in higher education, as referenced in Figure 5, the bar chart for Q3A below. I find this to be an interesting observation as the landscape of funding for higher education institutions has drastically changed over the past ten-plus years. Yet, many of the participants working within the external engagement space of higher education institutions have made a tenure for themselves within the industry.

Figure 5. Question 3-A
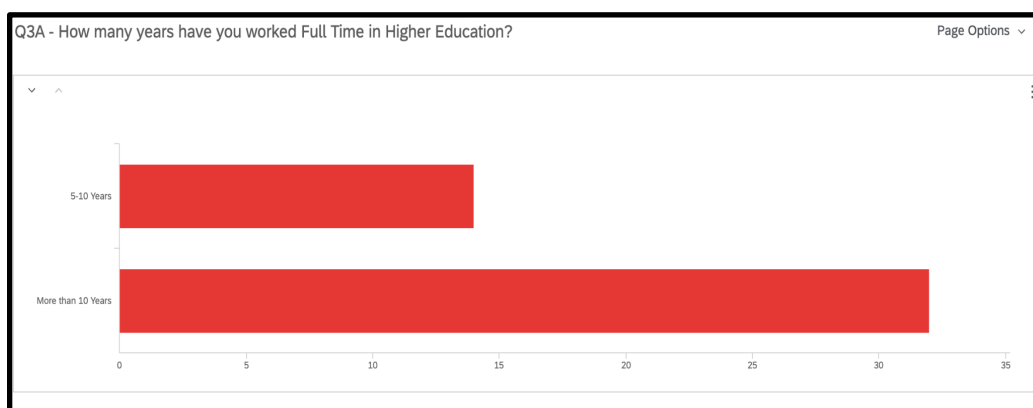
As I analyzed through the lens of job duties and responsibilities, the participants were asked how much time their daily responsibilities were spent on external engagement. This question was like the one asked during the exploratory focus group. While not analyzed in chapter three, during the exploratory focus group, the participants could not settle on a clear answer to this question, as many of them noted their staff did many of the out-of-office hours with many external partners, even though it was most of their responsibility, too. It is interesting that these survey results were all over the place, as you can see from Figure 6, the Q3B bar graph below. I found it interesting that the results are more straightforward when given a quantitative way to answer a question versus a qualitative way. Also, I wonder what relation to status and power on a university campus plays to the overarching tone of understanding how your time allowed for engagement is relative to the number of cultivation touchpoints that can be created. This is another visual of the inequities of faculty and staff on university campuses (Dispa, 2021). My professional interpretation is that nontenured staff have most of the responsibility of bringing revenue while faculty have protected jobs and less revenue requirements for their job security.

Figure 6. Question 3-B

Q3B - What percentage range of time do you spend with external audiences (i.e. stakeholder engagement), to preform your assigned duties/responsibilities at your institution?

When analyzing gender and race identities as they relate to the work of external engagement on behalf of higher education institutions, of the 60 respondents, 73% were female, and 27% were male, as seen in Figure 7, the Q4 bar graph. This finding is worth noting because, in my professional experience, I have not experienced this study's gender reflection in the rooms I have been a part of when speaking of external engagement in higher education. Many conferences (i.e., NACRO and CASE) have an overwhelming sense of male-white dominance in the conversation and attendance. Highlighting the number of female participants in this study may have everything to do with a female researcher trying to make a name for themselves in the space of external engagement and not a representation of the entire scope of the staff/faculty who work with external audiences within higher education.

Figure 7. Question 4
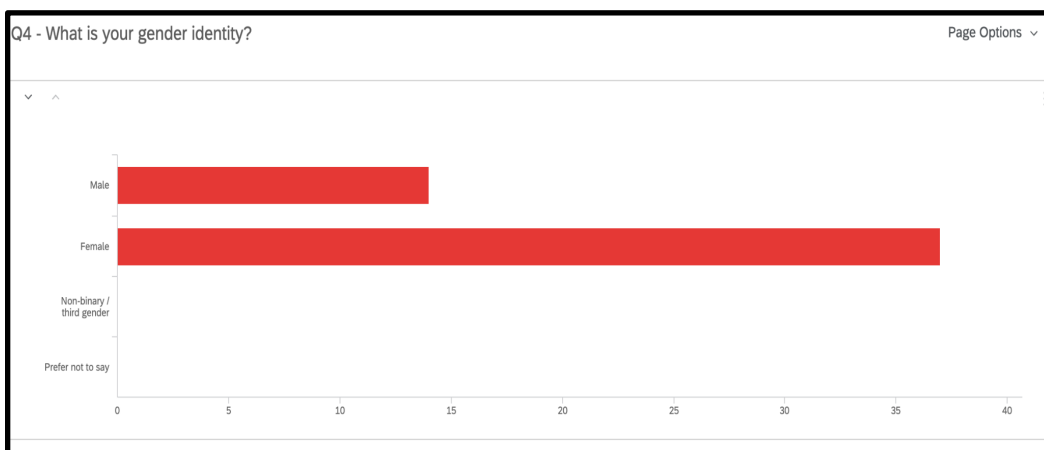
While analyzing the participants' race, the study indicated a lack of diversity in the data results. This topic was discussed at a Women in Higher Education Leadership Summit I attended at Harvard University in 2018 and is well documented in much of the literature we read about in our coursework (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). As noted in Figure 8, the Q5 bar graph below, an overwhelming majority of the participants in the study were white at 89%. I will have more to say on this subject in the future consideration sections of Chapter Five.

Figure 8. Question 5
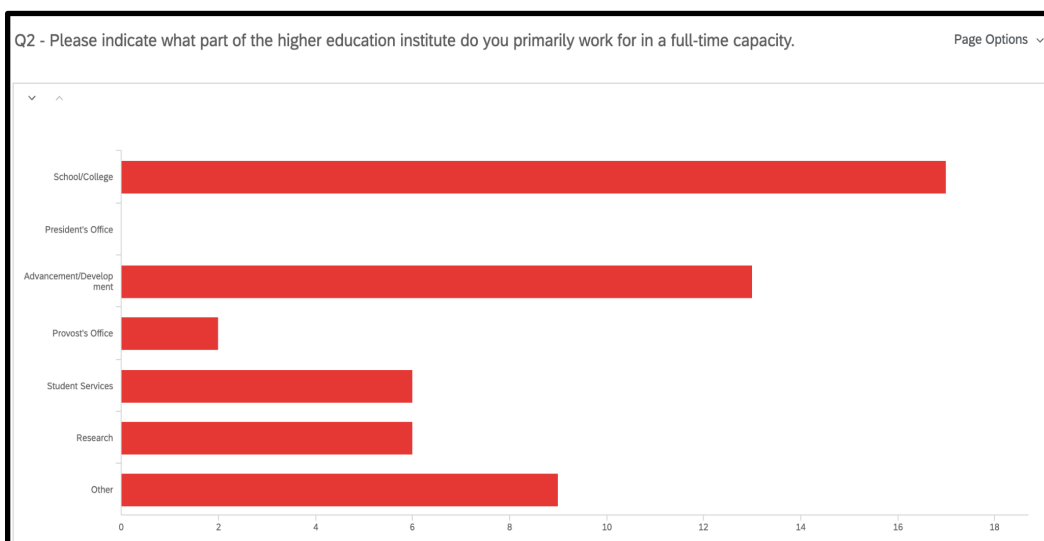
Regarding geographic demographics, from the 50 participants who participated in the study who submitted their zip codes, higher education faculty and staff were represented across the nation, as highlighted in the map below in Figure 9, via Google Maps. I am proud of the outreach efforts used during the cultivation of participants for the Phase II data set; however, I wish there had been more of an equally distributed representation of national opinions.

Figure 9. Demographic Map

Note. https://www.google.com/mymaps
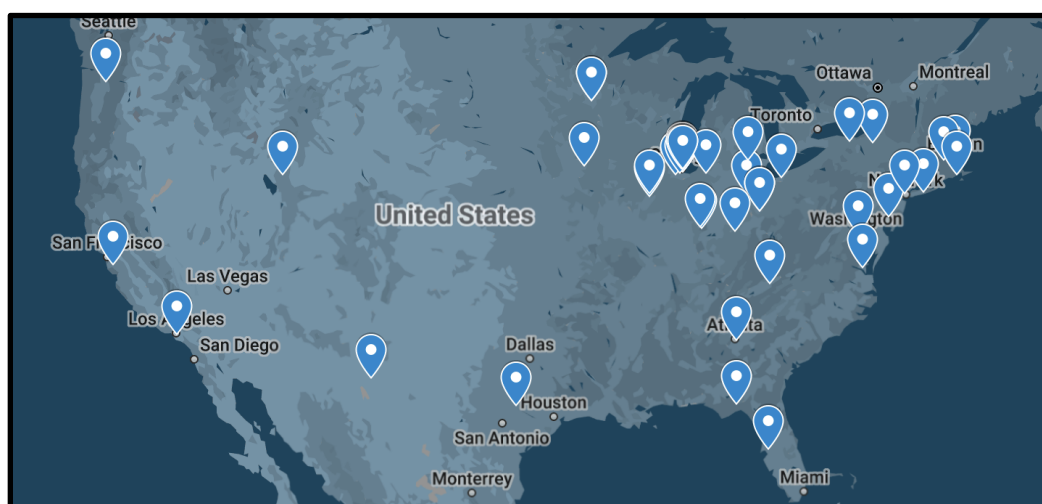
Instruments

The themes identified in the exploratory focus group were used to develop a model of external engagement. A video was created utilizing Zoom and Google Presentation software to animate a video explaining the model and how to utilize the model for a higher education institution. A survey using Qualtrics was also used in Phase II as a pre-survey tool to qualify participants for the study, and a post-video survey tool was used to analyze the model and offer open-ended recommendations for modifications to the model.

Data Analysis

A Qualtrics report was used to analyze the impact of the survey, and thematic analysis was used through holistic coding to analyze the qualitative data. Complete data analysis will be uncovered in Chapter Four.

Step Four: Observing (More Fact Finding)

I believe there should be a modification in this study by adding a newer title here, Analysis and Reevaluation. As noted here, after I designed a model and the quantitative survey and circulated it to collect over 50 responses, I analyzed the qualitative data using the holistic coding analysis approach, which will be outlined in depth in Chapter 4. Then, staying true to Lewin's Model of Action Research, I gathered more facts to redesign the model for additional research and fact-finding.

Step Five: Reflecting and Acting Again

This step in the Lewin's Model of Action Research in Figure 1 looks to have been the final phase or conclusion of the model when the Lewin's Model of Action Research is designed to be a circular model of continuous motion. Therefore, the model of external partnership for higher education will be redesigned based on the feedback from the survey and remade and tested again with future staff and faculty in higher education in future studies.

Therefore, you will note that in Chapter Five, I analyzed the survey results and reviewed the recommended suggestion for improvement to the model's original design based on the data collected in the open-ended question. I have made a new model, and it will be tested in the future for use and continuous improvements.

Research Schedule

Below in Table 2 is the tentative research schedule, subject to change based on feedback timelines and external factors out of our control:

Table 2. Research Schedule

Month	Item	SME
Feb	Develop and Recruit for Qualitative Exploratory focus group	Colleen
March	Host Qualitative Exploratory focus group	Colleen
April	Analyze Qualitative Exploratory focus group Data	Colleen / Linda / Demetri
May	Develop and Recruit for Quantitative Survey	Colleen
June-July	Analyze Quantitative Data	Colleen
Aug	Reviewing of Finding and Start Writing	Colleen
Nov	Draft of Dissertation to Committee	Colleen / Committee
March	Defend Dissertation	Colleen

Validity of the Study

The strengths of this study are heavily weighted on identifying multiple participants within higher education to complete the quantitative data set in Phase II to test the model's efficacy. Having multiple stakeholders within higher education institutions garners different perspectives for the process improvement portion of Lewin's Model of Action Research.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this study is that it does not identify categories within subgroups. For example, if all the study participants are staff within a community-centered engagement office, their data may show high engagement with external partners. Another example would be if all the faculty members are from a business school, the likelihood of their engagement with an external corporation would be greater than that of an arts and sciences school. To compensate for

this, I tried to circulate the survey through multiple channels of higher education offices to ensure a broader stroke of participants from various disciplines within higher education and from numerous geographic areas within higher education spaces.

Another limitation or challenge with this study is the territorialism of external partnerships within higher education. This is a very political topic within the senior leadership of higher education; therefore, participants may not want to voice their opinions on this topic. Creating a completely anonymous research study is vital to finding out the actual challenges within the higher education landscape as it relates to external partnerships.

Feasibility

The greatest feasibility of using Lewin's Model of Action Research is that your research is never fully completed. It needs to be constantly nurtured, evaluated, tested, and modified to see if it's relevant to the current higher education landscape. While I predict completing the entire mixed-method quantitative study using the action research framework for my dissertation research, realistically, this research may never be fully finalized. Within the action research framework, utilizing a continuous improvement model for future higher education institutions and external partnership engagement opportunities is essential to keep the study relevant.

Reporting

For now, I will report the findings of this study utilizing a storytelling method of sharing each finding as the exploratory research study during my dissertation presentation. As I have recently shifted industries, I have not decided if I am going to pursue any future exploration of consulting work in the space of higher education, as I had previously considered at the beginning of my research.

Quality of the Study

While I spent over 20 years in higher education, I now work at a veterans' nonprofit organization, which has given me a different perspective on external engagement with higher education institutions. I plan, to the best of my abilities, to remove biases from the study, to look at the current challenges higher education institutions face, and, based on the feedback given by the participants, to analyze the data based on the data alone. I am aware that each institution functions differently and, therefore, must respect the results of each institution's feedback. This study is intense with many layers. I will stay consistent with the organizational flow of the study as outlined above. I will also commit to the transparency of the study by sharing the results with the study participants should they request them.

Future Modifications and Conclusion

As you can see from the action research framework, this is very much structured like a cultivation sales cycle, whereas the research study is never fully complete. As a practitioner-scholar, if I choose to do future research, I would like to explore if the new model of external partnership is relevant to changing the culture of higher education and the changing landscape of the current workforce. These quantitative questions will develop later and influence what I would find through thematic analysis.

Based on a model of external partnership engagement I designed, along with the collected data outlined in the study above to describe the state of practices related to external partnerships, a model of the transformative external partnership will be developed through my research and analyzed findings. The external framework from other universities and external organizations has a specific lens to where their funding comes from, focusing primarily on the advancement/ fundraising angle of higher education. Whereas, I have the practitioner knowledge of being a

former senior administrator in higher education (including a background in student services, advancement, and academic areas of an institution). The blending together of these two internal methodologies, plus putting a high priority on the feedback from the qualitative and quantitative data sets collected, will allow for a more significant, co-created external partnership model to enact change within higher education.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH

Overview

This study investigates the relationship between higher education institutions and external partnerships. This chapter is divided into three primary sections to present the findings of the research study: section one: exploratory focus group analysis, section two: model creation, and section three: survey data analysis. To complete the action research framework, Chapter Five will address a new model and future study recommendations. The analysis follows the plan outlined in Chapter Three and includes a descriptive analysis of the Phase I exploratory focus group qualitative data analysis with supportive literature and practitioner-scholar observation notes and the Phase II survey quantitative data along with supportive literature and practitioner-scholar observation notes.

To center our thematic analysis, throughout this chapter, I utilized a holistic coding approach of qualitative research (Saldana, 2021), centering the analysis on the following key indicators: what was asked of the participants, what was said of the participants, does it align with existing literature, and has this been observed or not observed with the primary researcher in their professional practitioner-scholar view. I wanted to restate the research questions of the study, which are:(1) What challenges do higher education institutions face when engaging external audiences? and (2) Through research, testing, and feedback, can there be clearly defined external levels of engagement with higher education? As we have answered question one during our literature review section in Chapter Two, highlighting the gaps in the literature findings, let

us turn our attention to research question two: What challenges do higher education institutions face when engaging external audiences?

Section One: Exploratory focus group Analysis

Recentering the purpose of the exploratory focus group. The exploratory focus group analysis is to help the primary researcher investigate challenges within the higher education ecosystem with external partnerships to help develop and design a model that can potentially be used within higher education to help address some of the challenges within higher education.

Thematic Analysis - Exploratory focus group

Centering our thematic analysis on themes around challenges higher education institutions face when engaging external audiences, two major themes were present during questions I moderated to the group. The first primary concern was the internal political tension within higher education ecosystems. The second central theme was challenges surrounding the financial distribution of funds across campuses.

Theme I: Internal Political Tensions

The participants were asked to explain the root challenge within their current or past institution with external relationships. As part of internal political tension, territorial sub-themes arose. As stated here by one participant,

> I'd imagine, as probably true for most institutions, how the hand and foot (don't) know what each other are doing in the community and try not to stumble over each other. As faculty, staff, and units of the institution go out and publicly engage with external constituencies in a charged political environment, it also can be a precarious tightrope to monitor, control, and anticipate the impact of activities and how the constituencies respond.

The above comment from this higher education professional suggests that when the geopolitical environment is charged, and the internal politics are charged, it makes for an agitated situation

for higher education professionals who are internally with external partners, especially within

government affairs offices. I can recall one time when I was working in an advancement office,

one of our colleagues would look through the local newspaper and send out a mass email to over

100 staffers in the advancement/development/alumni relations team, notifying everyone on the

local ballot was an alumnus of the university, as if to imply that you should vote for the political

candidate because of their affiliation to your job. I was so young in my career that while I knew

this had to have been against some sort of human resource policy, I never spoke up against it as

the higher education administrator who sent the email was my senior in the hierarchy within the

institution. This was both an actual political challenge and an internal political challenge.

As a counterpoint to this thought around internal workplace politics, in an article from

higheredjobs.com,

> Politics is pretty much inevitable, but politics does not need to be a dirty word, said
> Shaunna Payne Gold, the associate director for assessment programs and student
> development at the University of Maryland. Politics is simply how you manage your
> resources and your relationships to make sure you are making a positive contribution.
> (*Secrets to Navigating Campus Politics*, n.d.)

As a professional product of a higher education institution, I identify with navigating workplace

politics as one of my professional superpowers. Some have said higher education has more

internal politics than the U.S. government.

Internal political challenges also arise around the conversation of interdisciplinary

collaborations, which dovetails the financial distribution of external funding to the institution.

When I asked the exploratory focus group of higher education administrators whether they have

participated or observed in collaboration, interdisciplinary engagement with external partners

specifically within the higher education space, one participant stated,

> I think, from the government relations side, it's probably the easiest to answer this of (us) going after state and federal funding where you're working with faculty disciplines, but also then legal. The president's office, etc. To develop the campus-wide strategy on how you're approaching a government agency elected official building the proposal and the request and following up with various campus members again in that interdisciplinary engagement to carry that ball over the goal line and get the funding.

When the follow-up question was asked about how the funding was distributed, there was no clear answer to this question, which is very common in higher education spaces, as there is no clear way to define financial distributions of external funding besides research grants.

Most institutions have policies within faculty handbooks stating. According to the University of California's Office of the President's Website,

> A university's F&A cost rate is not a percent of the total grant but rather a percentage only of the research project's direct costs. Currently, the average amount paid to universities for F&A costs is approximately 25-33 percent of the total amount of a grant. (*University of California | Office of the President*, n.d.)

While working at a higher education institution, I created an internal academic program agreement, approved by the provost's office, with two different departments. These agreements allowed the academic departments to offer their academic programming to non-students for non-credit at discount pricing to gain revenue and ideally matriculate those students to their credit-bearing programming while also allowing a way to capture the funding without using the bursar's office, due to the political challenges they may face. With this agreement executed, our office would earn 25% of the funds raised for the administrative costs for marketing and processing the funds to the department, while the department would capture 75% of the funds for their use. This model was deemed a success and was asked to be replicated within a few different offices. However, the infrastructure of people resources did not support the growth model for this initiative.

Along the same lines of tension, the political tensions between external partners and higher education institutions become a real challenge when parties are trying to "get work done." As stated by one exploratory focus group participant:

> Let's get it done by external partners, and that leads to oftentimes, even with the best of intentions, friction, misunderstanding, and frustration. The number of times external partners ask why legal counsel has to be involved. Everything is comical at this point. But it's like. Yeah, I'll leave it there.

Higher education and external organizations, especially businesses, work at a different pace. This becomes a challenge for a variety of obstacles to overcome when partnering together, from contracts to financials to event schedules and calendar arrangements. High education is not known for working on a business model but more for working as an academy of knowledge. As highlighted in a 2022 McKinsey and Company, A new approach for a university in gridlock: A case study,

> A major public research university knew it had reached the breaking point. Its outdated administrative operations were holding it back on several fronts. Slow response times, red tape, and time-consuming administrative tasks had generated resentment and frustration among faculty. Some had already left for other universities, citing a lack of support for research administration, an inability to hire critical lab staff in less than six months, and difficulty keeping labs stocked with supplies. (Gajendragadkar et al., 2019)

It is no secret that higher education has yet to have the nimblest business financial model. Clevenger and MacGregor (2019) identify, "This blurriness comes, in part, because higher education's business model is funded by tuition, government aid, and private support, which includes individuals, foundations, and corporations" (p. 126). Most higher education internal offices rely on a financial model of a spend-down budget set by the institution. Often, departments are forced to cut their funding, some annually, based on institutional need and enrollment numbers. The practices of creating a budget within higher education institutions are constantly in flux and can impact many student-run programs as enrollments change throughout

the academic year. This change management model of budgeting is just one micro example of how the lack of communication from senior leadership can impact programming, offices, and, at times, staffing.

Theme II: Systems Challenges

The second central theme from the exploratory focus group presented itself in two ways: a focus on systems challenges. When I asked the participants to identify the root cause of external challenges within the institution, maybe they highlighted systems challenges in two distinct ways. First, they talked about the technical challenges higher education institutions face with technical systems "talking" to each other. The exploratory focus group said there could be up to 10 different computer software systems on campus, not to mention the different campuses using all the information. It is a daunting task to gather all the information together on who the contact is and where and to manage the internal and external relationships. To summarize the frustrations with this technical issue, as shared here by one of the participants during the exploratory focus group,

> So, I definitely echo Participant 4 and Participant 6, and one of the additional layers I think about measuring success is that even if we have the best of intentions, in doing so, we don't necessarily have integrated technological systems and tools across all of the historic university silos to have a comprehensive way of doing a more holistic evaluation.

A recent study co-authored by UCLA and MIT Press supports the exploratory focus group findings. In their research study,

> They point toward the need for leadership that supports a panoramic view of the data infrastructure and policies at play within individual universities, whether realized by creating a new senior role with relevant authority and budget or through greater multi-stakeholder coordination. (Borgman & Brand, 2022)

To support the need for more incredible technology infrastructure within higher education and updated systems, which would help with the challenges of external partners

engaging with higher education institutions. The National Association of College and University

Business Officers (NACUBO) published an article in 2022 capturing Higher Education's Top 5

Business Issues, as outlined below. Modernizing technology is on the list as crucial business

support for higher education to grow and be sustainable in the future (*Higher Education's Top 5*

Business Issues, n.d.)

Figure 10. Top 5 Higher Education Business Issues of 2022
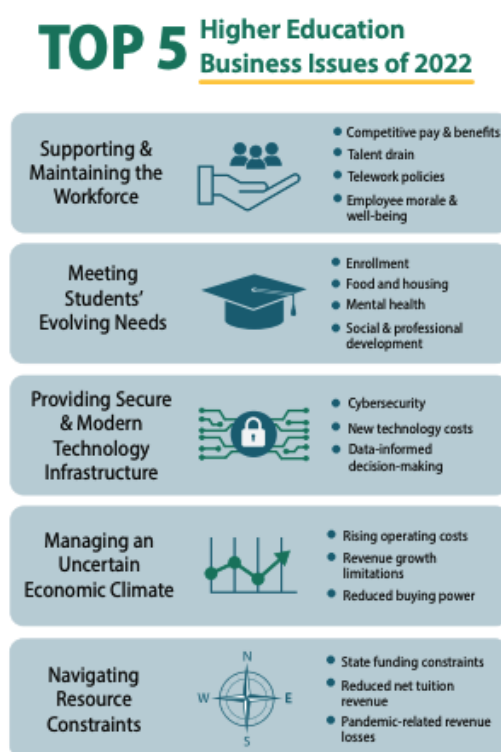
Source: Higher Education's Top 5 Business Issues, n.d.

I have seen this process play out when speaking with external organizations. Once, when

I was speaking with a corporation and looking for sponsorship dollars for a women's forum we

were hosting at a university, I contacted a corporation that was a previous sponsor. The

individual at the corporation with whom I spoke was new to her role at the company, and she

requested historical data or a dashboard/scorecard to see how her company had engaged with the

university over the past five years. This information took me over two weeks to produce for her because there were so many departments to connect with. So much historical knowledge was lost from the transition in staff and systems at the university over the years. It was highly embarrassing to tell this company, whom I had contacted for financial support, that I only had a fraction of the information they had requested due to a lack of internal organization skills on the university's behalf.

Another theme that arose under systems challenges was the geographical systems of higher education institutions. Many higher education institutions have multiple campuses, some within the same state, some within the country, and some with international offices. These geographical locations also have policy and systems challenges for external partnerships. One of the exploratory focus group participants noted,

> I don't know that it's the biggest challenge, but one that just struck me was geographic. And that is to say, the partners that we. I guess I aspire to work with people who are generally not located in the same geography as we are.

This conversation dovetailed into many conversations around geographical challenges related to taxes and policies. Many universities are tax-exempt or pay little taxes when considering an external partner as a government entity. However, if the university does pay taxes and decides it would like to be an online university, if the official address of its entity is still in the state where it needs to pay taxes, should it pay them? Some consulting firms like KPMG leveraged this topic for new business development for their offices, as seen on their website: "Tax Issues for Higher Education Institutions Operating Virtually" (*Tax Issues for Higher Education Institutions Operating Virtually*, n.d.)

Gaps in the Exploratory Focus Group Data

One significant gap in the data was on the demographic side of the participants. While there was gender diversity in the senior leadership for the exploratory focus group, racial diversity was absolutely lacking, with 100% of the participants being White. This is not because of a lack of reaching out and inviting diverse candidates for the exploratory focus group but because of timelines and previous commitments, which were reasons why others could not participate in the study.

From a subject matter perspective, what was not discussed and was surprising to me was the lack of internal policies around relationship management of external partners and the lack of structure of how external partnerships are managed. The rationale behind these findings is twofold. One, because the exploratory focus group comprised all senior-level administrators, this challenge with external relations might be more of a mid-level to director-level challenge and not something brought to their attention at the executive level of management of a university leadership council. Another thought is that this challenge is "too big to solve," and senior administration is aware of it and does not want to tackle it. There are demonstrations in the literature that senior leaders in all industries avoid making hard decisions not to upset their workforce. As noted in the Harvard Business Review article, many senior leaders are very good at avoiding making hard decisions because they either do not want to update the current team or are not equipped to make challenging decisions in a thoughtful and empathetic leadership way (Carucci, 2018). As we know, many leaders in the workforce are promoted because they are very good at their job or their discipline, but they are never taught how to manage people or lead business decisions.

Assess the Accuracy of the Data Collected

The data was accurately collected by transcript recording for the qualitative data via Zoom and transcripts via Zoom. The recordings for the exploratory focus group have been destroyed, and all participant indicator markers have been dissolved.

Reflection from the Exploratory Focus Group

What was evident in the exploratory focus group is that while internal political challenges and systems challenges were the highlights of this exploratory focus group, in my experiences in higher education, time and financial resources are also significant challenges. If there is a more straightforward way to identify a process to engage more external partners to a university for external funding, would higher education offices welcome it? Would a model and a centralized office overseeing these external relationships and managing the model of engagement help declutter the challenges faced within the higher education ecosystem while bringing in additional financial resources to the higher education institution? Let's design and test it out.

**Exploratory focus group Comment for Future Consideration**

There is one exploratory focus group comment I wanted to document here to address in future studies, as I believe this is something that will need to be analyzed in future research on this model. One of the exploratory focus group participants stated, "The root challenge for us is how the University measures the success of external partnerships." I wrestle with the word "measure," as the participant stated, or should it have been "defined." I would argue that success needs to be defined before metrics can be established to measure it. This would be an excellent follow-up research question for future consideration.

Section Two: Model Creation

A standard question I always asked myself is, how can a university become more of a transformative partner with this external organization instead of a transactional relationship? Dr. David Hildebrandt from National University wrote an op-ed article a year ago about becoming a trusted advisor within higher education. In this article, Hildebrandt (2018) stated, "This will result in a more open dialogue, deeper engagement, and improved insight that result in better decisions which lead to greater trust." This article highlighted how you can deepen the engagement and build greater trust. The exploratory focus group centered on the challenges that higher education institutions face when working with external partners, and they are significant, more than what a one-hour exploratory focus group can discuss. However, what if there was a way to start small and focus on creating a common language where everyone across campus is using the same vocabulary when talking with external partners? This may solve a few of the challenges around understanding who is talking with whom and how engaged they are within the university.

After analyzing the exploratory focus group themes of the challenges senior leadership faces within higher education and reflecting upon the challenges I have faced as a practitioner-scholar in higher education through working in different externally facing departments over 20 years, I believe there is an innovative solution that we can design and test. Therefore, I developed the model of external engagement below with all the knowledge I have obtained.

Figure 11. Model of External Engagement
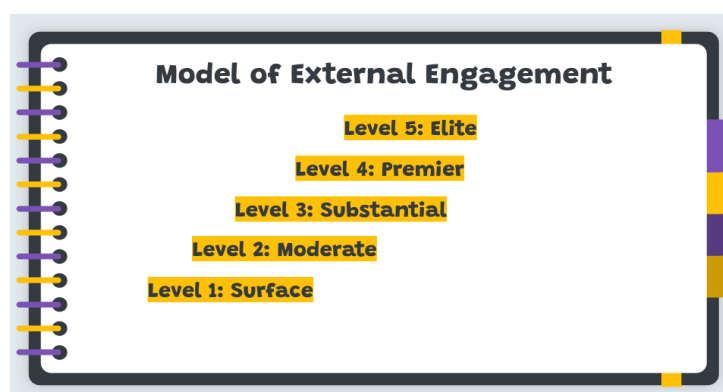
This model was explained in a short video, which I shared via a YouTube link with a Qualtrics survey link to gather data. I will explain this in more depth in section three of this chapter. Below is the voice-over audio description of the details I shared to explain the actual definitions of the model.

The Definitions

Level 1 - Surface Level - This would be defined as one-off transactional relationships with external partners (i.e., Advancement - one-time donations from a will of $1,000 to the university). There is not enough capital or tracked affinity for a major gift prospect, but grateful enough to steward the donor with a thank you note.

Level 2 - Moderate Level - This would be defined as a once-a-year engagement with external partners (i.e., hosting a medical student at their facility for their practicum experience). The University can rely on this annually and continue to cultivate additional engagement opportunities like an employer-paid career fair.

Level 3 - Substantial Level - This would be defined as 2-3 times a year engaging with 1-2 different departments with external partners (i.e., A corporate donor of the university

would like to get more involved with hiring students. So, they attend job fairs, post jobs, and host info sessions).

Level 4 - Premier Level - This would be defined as quarterly checkpoints with external partners who are working with several departments within the University (i.e., Corporate Giving Campaign donor, hosting an annual hackathon for computer science students, hosting lunch & learn opportunities with the School of Business and has an annual day of community service for their employees to engage with students through volunteer work)

Level 5 - Elite Level - This would be defined as the "trusted advisor" relationships with external partners meeting monthly with the higher education institution. (i.e., the stakeholder is engaging at all levels of time (giving back to the university through classroom guest speakers,) talent (hiring students and alumni for open positions, hosting mentorship opportunities for students and sponsorship opportunities through an internal alumni network), and treasure (sponsoring research, enrolling staff in degree and non-degree programs and corporate donations).

As you can see from the visual of the model below, an external partner would matriculate from the baseline at level one up to level five based on their amount of engagement with a university. How might the external partner do this? They would have to deepen their relationships with the higher education institutions. The external partner would have built greater trust with the higher education institution and engagement more via time, talent, and treasure - it is the stewardship model of engagement ("*Tidings,* April-May 2005," n.d.)

Many development or advancement offices in higher education have some sort of steward offerings, but through this model, there are defined levels and intentionality, which could then be used throughout a higher education ecosystem if explained with good intent.

The following visual I shared during the short video link with the survey participants is how a university could visualize using this model of external engagement at their institution. I do not feel it is professionally responsible for a model to be widely distributed amongst colleagues without a playbook to utilize within the higher education institution. Also, the next set of survey questions asked of the participants would be for them to reflect on if this could be utilized at their institution. Below is the explanation of how the model of external engagement could be applied within their institution and what resources need to be internally allocated for effective implementation.

Figure 12. Framework for Usage of the Model
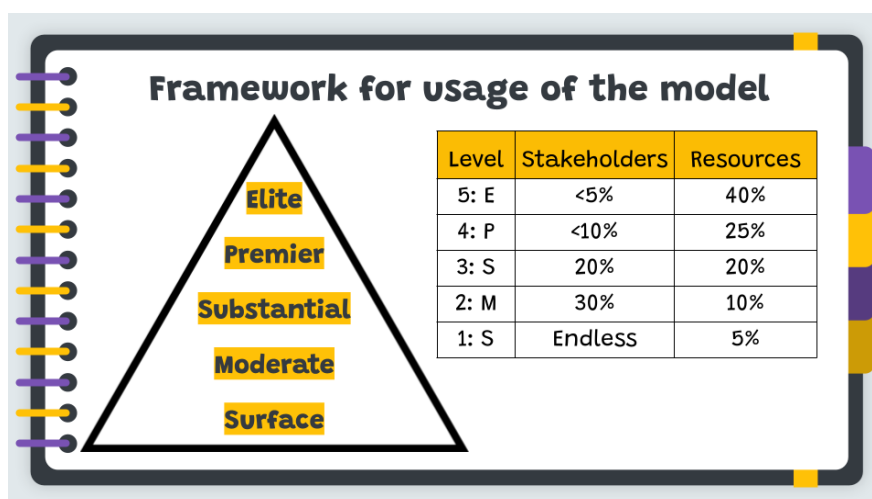
This is the audio explanation accompanying this slide during the video explanation of the usage of the model for internal implementation:

Explanation of Internal Usage for Higher Education Institutions

View this as an inverted sales cycle funnel. The bottom (surface engagement) of them should be the most stakeholders or clients with the least amount of time engaging them. The top (elite engagement) should be less than 5% of your stakeholders, while you would

spend the most significant amount of time with them because of all their touch points within a higher education institution. It is essential to understand that, if used correctly within a higher education institution, departmental resources of time, talent, and treasure should reflect the exact correlation for deeper engagement. For example, increasing front-line staff for cultivation at the bottom and strengthening department budgets for expenditures and salaries for more senior, experienced staff acting as a "trusted advisor" relationship manager at the top.

This explanation of the usage was then followed up with a 1-5 scale based on how much they understood the levels and how they thought the model might be able to be implemented within their higher education institution.

Section Three: Survey Data Analysis

Section Three is broken up into a few sub-categories to help assist with the flow of analyzing the quantitative data of the participants as well as the analysis of the model to include the following: qualitative data review of the model of external engagement, thematic analysis of qualitative data open-ended feedback, gaps in data analysis and reflections from survey data. Let us begin with the participants who took the survey.

Quantitative Data Review of the Model

Participants were asked to view a short video explanation of a newly developed model of external engagement for higher education to consider using to define and deepen their existing external partnership. The video was located on a YouTube.com site, and the link is below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQrKm82-2tw. This video addressed the critical research questions around whether higher education can define stakeholders and key partnership levels and whether external engagement can be deepened within a university.

As we move to the analysis of the data, Figure 13, Q7 reflects the question that was asked during the quantitative survey about the potential usage of the model.

Figure 13. Question 7
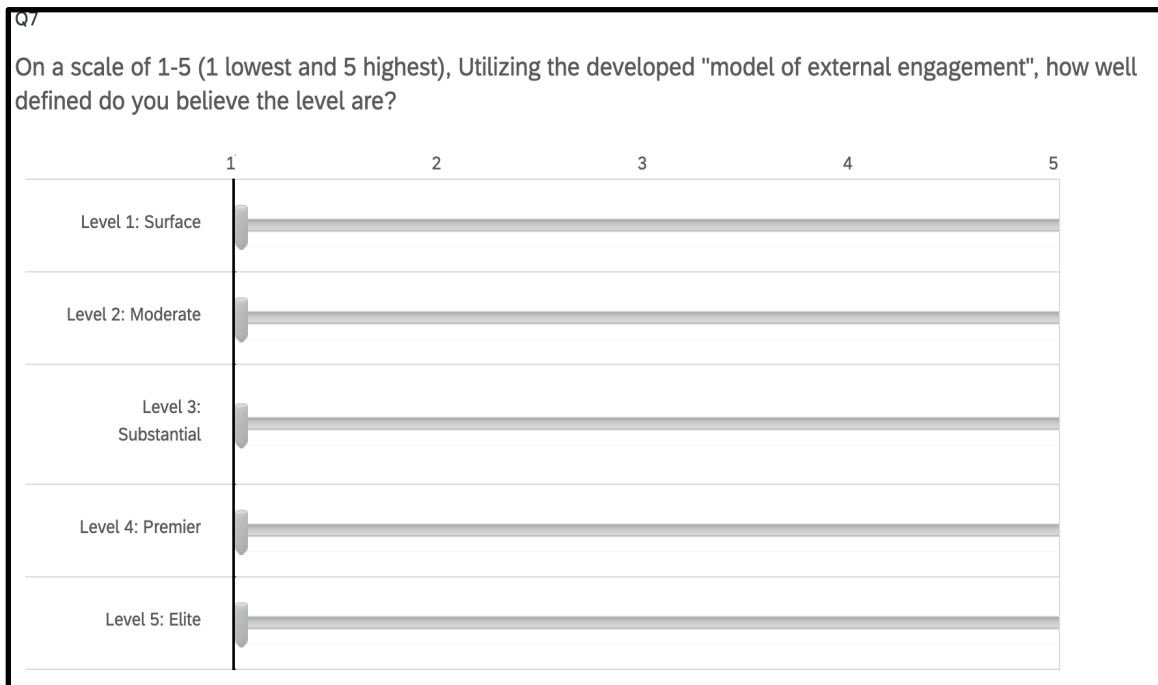
Researcher Analysis: The data from the survey indicates Levels I, 2, and 5 in the model are defined relatively well, as there was a pretty good understanding of how those categories fit within the definitions outlined in the video. However, Levels 3 and 4 need more substantial, concrete examples of how there is a differentiator between the levels. After further reflection, Levels 3 and 4 could be combined for a new model to be tested as part of the action research study continuum.

Figure 14. Model Usage
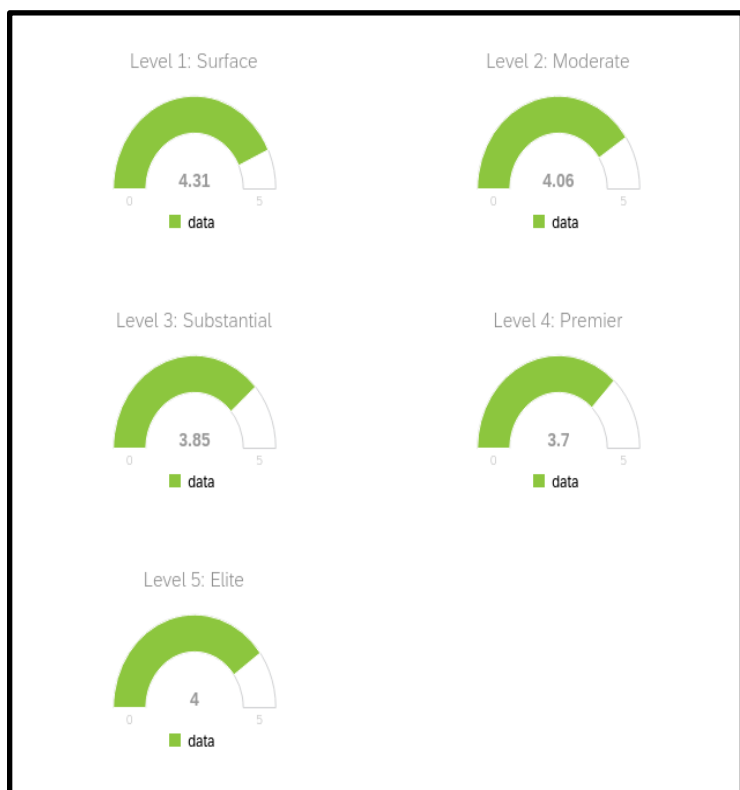
Probability of Usage

Looking at Figure 15, when addressed in Q8 of the probability of usage within their own higher education institutions, results seemed favorable, with 74.28% of the participants indicating Definitely yes or Probably yes. I also want to address that only 8.57% said Probably not and 0% said Definitely not, which is a good sign that the model has faculty/staff within higher education thinking that a framework could be used within a higher education ecosystem for external engagement.

Figure 15. Probability of Usage
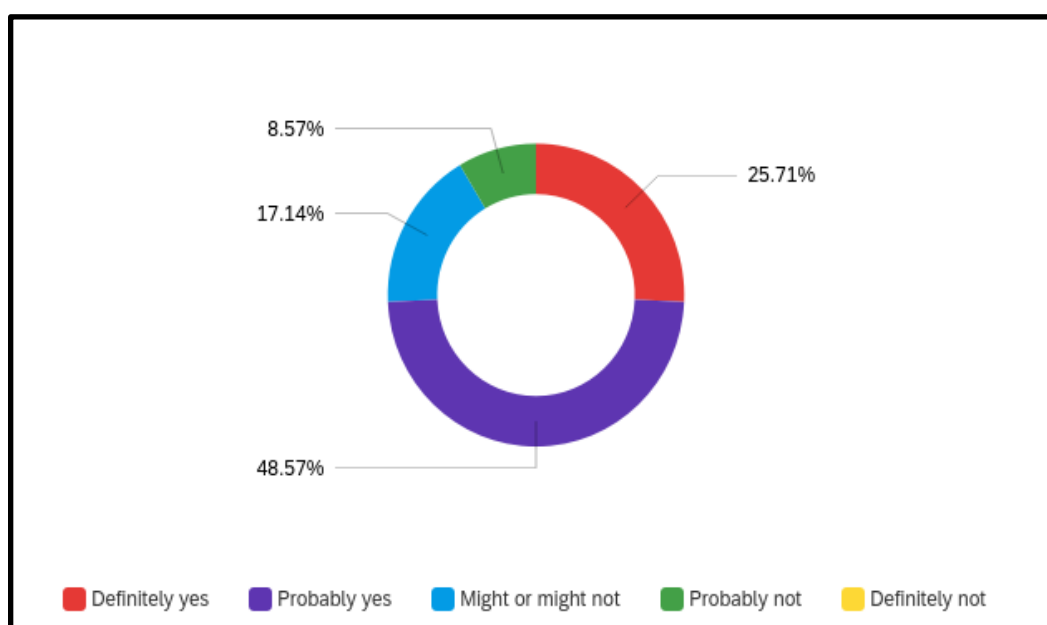
Thematic Analysis - Open-Ended Survey Data Analysis

As part of the data collection for the quantitative survey, I asked an open-ended question: "Q9 - Please share with me any additional thoughts you might have about the utilization of this framework and model at your institute." The results from there were interesting to analyze based on internal department usage of the model and recommended suggestions. I have categorized the results from the findings into three themes via sections. Section 1: Comments directly connected to the surveyed model, Section II - Comments where participants indicated their usage of something similar (both formally and informally), and Section III - Comments that need more clarity and understanding.

Section I: Comments Directly Connect to the Surveyed Model

- Very important for institutions to realize the significant resources required to maintain elite relationships.

- The model would be helpful if used at our district office where all the advancement movement is happening. However, if individual campuses were able to have their own advancement position, then it would greatly impact the work we do with funding and other opportunities.

- The challenge that I've personally witnessed, having worked for two different institutions (one large/public, one small/private), is getting all of the internal stakeholders to agree on a framework and to work together to develop the right strategic relationships.

- Need more clarity on definitions of levels.

- I think it would need to have some additional concrete tasks and activities attached to each level that are unique to the institution. For example, each of the existing activities would need to be part of one of the levels above to ensure accuracy in tracking/scoring engagement.

- I say probably because of the amount of internal collaboration and cooperation that is needed as you move to the narrow part of the funnel. Without it, efforts can become disjointed as more internal stakeholders want to be at the table. And you will always have the issue of rogue actions.

- I love how you have framed this, Colleen. It makes sense in so many ways.

- I like the idea of this framework. As my rankings indicate, it's easiest to identify the lowest and higher tiers, but the middle tiers get a bit fuzzier. I'm also interested in how the model can be used with the diverse range of institutions engaging in this work.

- I am with a Center for Professional Development, and it is difficult to get this concept understood across the university. Opportunities are missed, and time is missed because of this. Love the model.

- Framework is a nice way to look at the potential. Barriers include alignment from senior leadership on what success looks like in the corporate space. I like how the model suggests the highest-level partners receive 40% of the resources, as this lines up with Plus Delta's (a development consulting firm) recommendation on how much time you should spend with/on your top prospects.

- For those institutions that are starting corporate engagement relationships, this provides a good outline of potential staffing needs depending upon the types of relationships they intend to foster.

Section II - Comments where participants indicated their usage of something similar.
(both formally and informally)

- We currently use an index score model to determine which of five categories our stakeholders reside in and allocate resources based on the index score.

- We already practice tiering current and prospective companies.

- This is very similar to my institution's model of corporate engagement. What has been unclear to me as we build out these levels of engagement, or tiers as we call them, is how we move companies between the levels as the relationship ebbs and flows. An example would be a premier company that has the same level of engagement, but with changes to corporate social responsibility or funding priorities, we've seen a significant drop in philanthropic funding. This may only be an example that applies to corporate relations based in advancement offices. Thanks for this great work!

- I use an informal version of this model to inform and prioritize my work.

Section III - Comments that need more clarity and understanding.

- The study has some flaws - I don't think people will be very familiar with your model and framework, and thus, it makes it difficult to assess - resulting in flawed results.

- I have no idea what the "model of external engagement" is.

- I believe that on the upper levels, you may have less engagement and more financial resources involved.

- Consider looking at the dissemination and implementation science models such as CFIR that might assist with a more specific method of engagement while considering other factors such as culture and cosmopolitanism.

Gaps in the Data Analysis

The only gaps I have with analyzing the data are my own educational gaps. I recognized that I needed to teach myself a lot of data analysis and lead my committee more than I anticipated to assist me with gaps in my knowledge, as my education did not prepare me for this type of analysis. However, I believe I collected enough data to answer my intended research questions and make a true finding and result from the study.

Assess the Accuracy of the Data Collected

The data was accurately collected through Qualtrics for the quantitative data, and all indicator markers for the participants were dissolved.

Address Missing Data

All the data collected for this study was accounted for during the analysis of Chapter Four for both the exploratory focus group and the survey, and no data was missing.

Reflection from the Survey Data

My reflections on this portion are a few. I would have preferred to have gathered more diverse participants for my study. I realized this when I was trying to gather full-time faculty and staff participants during the summer months and that many may not have been on campus. I also wish I understood a better way of analyzing the feedback from the participants that were nonessential to the research study. Maybe a different scale or non-open-ended questions would have been a better choice to use during the survey.

Thinking through outliers within the study, I may want to include Section III - Comments that need more clarity and understanding. As a first-time researcher, I did a lot of research and analysis to prepare for this research study. It combines 20 years of higher education observation notes and years of analyzing other research studies. I took an innovative approach to looking at a practical challenge within the higher education ecosystem and was still met with analytical and philosophical challenges from the participants. I would argue that each participant has their own perception of how they would handle their workload within their institution, including the bias they bring when engaging in a survey. I find it interesting that of the naysayers to the model, there was only one comment offering me a suggestion to review additional materials. Overall, I am very proud of the findings and analysis that helped me continue the action research framework study in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Summary

As stated in Chapter One, this mixed-method study aims to investigate, understand, and define relationships between higher education institutions and external partners. These definitions would allow for greater exploration of existing and potential partnerships for institutions to augment their financial needs and not put extra expenses on students or cut the administrative budgets, which are already lean at many higher education institutions.

As I center the research study around the only research question we have not answered up to this point, it is research question 2). Through research, testing, and feedback, can there be clearly defined external levels of engagement with higher education? Through the research study exploratory focus group, the external engagement model creation, and the accompanying quantitative survey to test the efficacy of the model, the answer to this research question is yes. Yes, there is a way that you can define external levels of engagement with higher education institutions, and that is through what I would now like to define publicly as the Reaney Model of External Engagement.

Based on Lewin's Model of Action Research, this newly designed model reflects Step 5: Acting and Reflecting Again (Dickens & Watkins, 1999). The Reaney Model of External Engagement (RMEE) has four levels of engagement, with newly defined levels based on survey feedback outlined below.

Figure 16. The Reaney Model of External Engagement (RMEE)
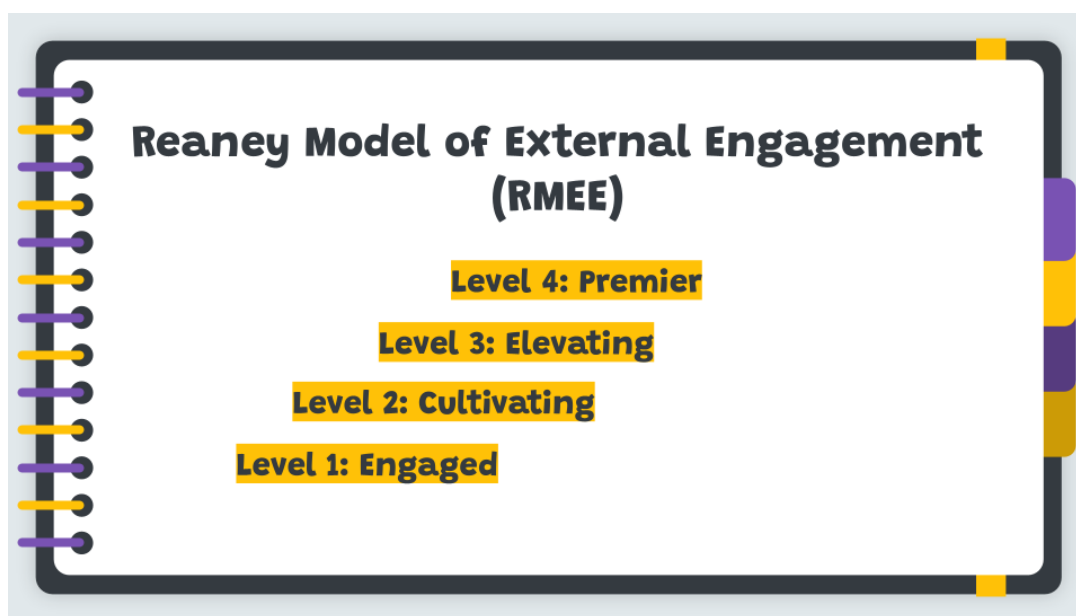
The RMEE-defined levels are as follows:

Level 1 -Engaged - This would be defined as one-off transactional relationships with external partners, whereas the external partner is engaged with the university but not heavily invested or interested in future opportunities. For example, during an annual day of giving, an alumnus donates $20 dollars but has never donated before. A stewardship note of thanks needs to be acknowledged, but this might not be going to spend significant time on them unless a pattern of giving is established.

Level 2 - Cultivating Level - This would be defined as an annual commitment by an external partner with the potential for future engagements. Keeping with the same example from before, our alumnus, who is a yearly donor on the university day of giving, also now hosts two interns in their office each year, attends a reunion each year, and is in talks with career services to have their HR office come to the career fair. This is an indicator that someone may have an individual low capacity to give but has the potential

to open doors and needs to be cultivated more based on the number of university touch points annually.

Level 3 - Elevating Level - Still staying with the same example as before, the alumnus has connected the higher education institution with their HR office. We now have figured out that we, as a university partner of this cooperation, have 35 alumni who work there. We are hosting corporate giving campaigns, multiple year-long internships, faculty lunches, and learning opportunities. This is a profound engagement opportunity that is being steered by a significant gifts officer from the Advancement office.

Level 5 - Premier Level - This would be defined as the "trusted advisor" relationships with external partners meeting monthly with the higher education institution. Keeping with the same corporate situation, this organization is engaging with alumni for corporate giving campaigns, faculty for lunch and learns and classroom speakers, students for capstone projects, staff for internships, and administration for advisor boards and advancement for corporate giving. This is the top tier of engagement an external partner can have with an institution.

While developing the new model is essential to Lewin's Model of Action Research, as I stated in Chapter Four, I do not believe that a model should be out in the world without directions on how to utilize it (especially if it has my name on it). So, I have also redesigned the framework on how to best utilize this for higher education institutions, which is outlined below.

Figure 17. Framework for Using RMEE
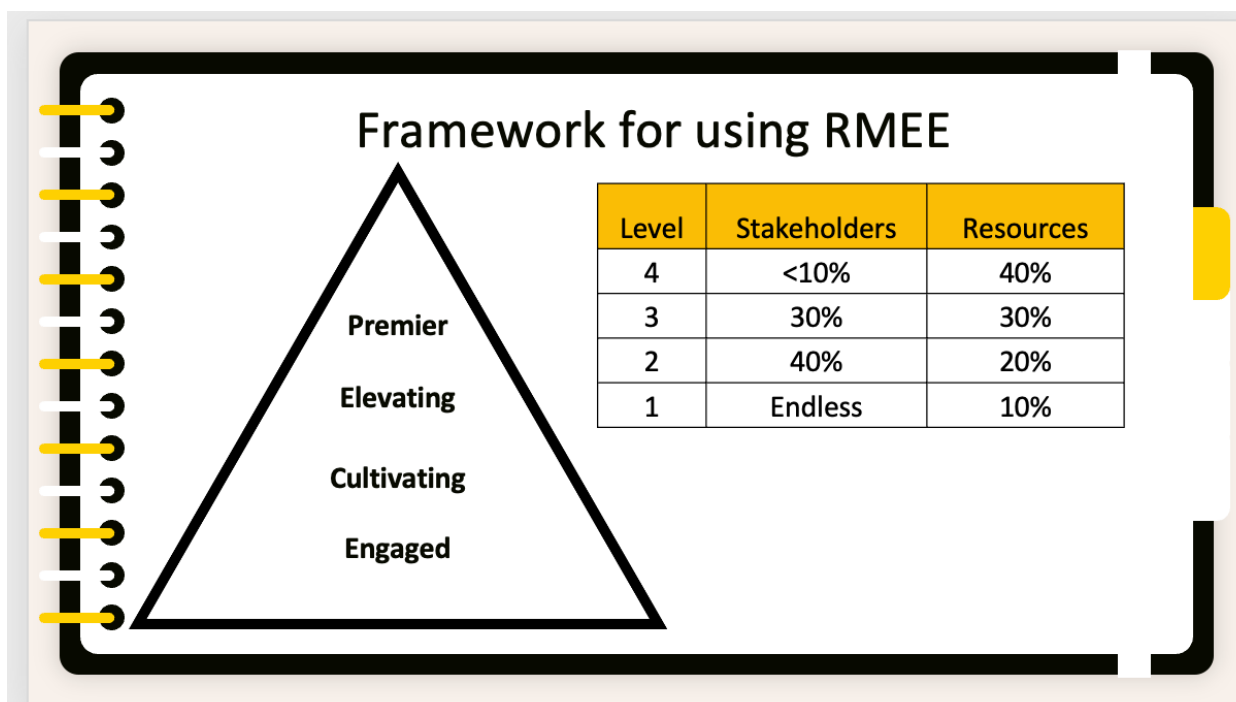
This framework still highlights the reverse sales funnel demonstrated in the first

framework; however, I have updated it with the newly defined four levels of engagement for

RMEE. As noted in the first designed implementation, the bottom of the pyramid should be the

stakeholders or clients with the least amount of time engaging them. The top should be less than

10% of your stakeholders, and you would spend the most significant amount of time and

resources on them. The following steps for this study would be to re-test the model with another

survey or to put the survey into action within a higher education system to see it in action.

Study Significance

I would like to highlight two key points that were addressed above but are worth noting

here again. As a first-generation college graduate, and after completing my first research study as

a practitioner-scholar, I would like to call out two significant researcher accomplishments. First,

73% of the participants in my research study were females working with external engagement in higher education. This sector of higher education has traditionally been known as the old White men's club, and I am proud that the female voice has been heard in my research. Second, a practitioner-scholar and non-faculty member developed a new model of defining external engagement for higher education through Lewin's Model of Action Research, which 74% of the participants in the study would or probably use, utilizing real-world, practical knowledge and hands-on approach vs. theoretical assumptions.

Implications

I believe this newly redesigned model of external engagement could help improve higher education in a variety of ways. I am going to demonstrate a few ways in which this will improve higher education with a few key assumptions already made. First, the top administration has already bought into the concept that the higher education institution has already identified the problems or challenges with the current system of stakeholder engagement. Second, they are fully supportive and would like to invest in a singular office to spearhead this initiative of rolling out a singular software system and continuous training and development program for educating all the internal stakeholders who connect with external partners on behalf of the higher education institution. Third, higher education institutions need to invest in personnel, technology support, and internal political support for the office to make the initiative a success. Now, with all those assumptions out of the way, when all this is up and running smoothly, the opportunities for improvement in higher education would be fantastic. There would be more significant opportunities for students to gain networking connections and employment with their employers of first choice through more connections across all sectors of campus, more significant opportunities for classroom guest speakers, opportunities for advancement to cultivate alumni

who are already connecting with former faculty, opportunities for corporate donors to communicate with faculty for capstone projects, students to connect with BRG groups at corporations globally for days of community service, which many times is a dollar per hour matching give for the university. The list can go on and on if the person overseeing the office can identify where the opportunities are and where the needs are for both parties involved and identify the win-win solution.

Future Modifications

As you can see from the action research framework, this study is structured like a cultivation sales cycle, while the action plan never ends. As a practitioner-scholar of higher education, in future research, I would like to continue to test whether this new model of external partnership is relevant to changing the culture of higher education. The external framework from other universities and external organizations has a specific lens to where their funding comes from, mainly focusing on higher education's advancement/fundraising angle. I have the practitioner knowledge of being an administrator in higher education (including a background in student services, advancement, and academic areas of an institution). The blending together of these two internal methodologies, plus putting a high priority on the feedback from the qualitative and quantitative data sets collected, will allow for a more excellent, co-created external partnership model to enact change within higher education.

Taking RMEE Beyond Higher Education

As I mentioned in my introduction, after a remarkable 20-year career in higher education, I have transitioned my skill sets to non-profit work. Recently, I was appointed to a position within the Pat Tillman Foundation (PTF), where I will be overseeing the Tillman Scholars Programs team and the Tillman Leadership Institute. It is a great honor to serve the military and

nonmilitary community and to carry out Pat's legacy through the work of our Tillman Scholars

every day. Through my day-to-day work, the Reaney Model of External Engagement could

easily be adapted within my sector of work as I am now on the other side of the model as the

external partner working with higher education institutions. Being in an organization with a staff

of 20 FTE nationwide, as I sit on the senior level executive level team, I am the one supporting

the buy-in for this initiative. As a practitioner-scholar, I would be remiss if I did not take the

opportunity to explain the approach and how I would utilize this in my current work within the

Pat Tillman Foundation. Here would be my explanation for external audiences on how to use this

model for their reference:

Figure 18. Reaney Model of External Engagement (RMEE)
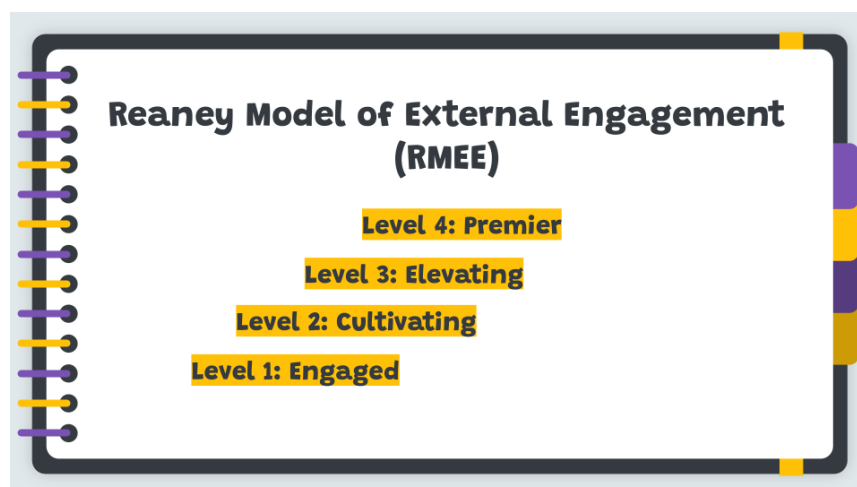
The RMEE-defined levels (for nonprofit management) are as follows:

Level 1 -Engaged - This would be defined as one-off transactional relationships with

external partners outside of PTF. The external partner is engaged with PTF but is not

heavily invested or interested in future opportunities. For example, someone comes to

the office to paint our walls and build new furniture but is not called upon for another

five years until we redesign the office again. A stewardship note of thanks needs to be sent for acknowledgment, but this is a low-cultivation activity.

Level 2 - Cultivating Level - This would be defined as an annual commitment by an external partner with the potential for future engagements. There is a corporate donor (Bob's House) who always donated annually to PTF for our annual Pat's Run in April in Tempe at ASU. His company (about 100 employees) always does a virtual walk and raises $5K for PTF each year. They are based in NYC. This is an opportunity to cultivate this donor as they have been a faithfully engaged "friend of the foundation" to see what more we can do together. Can we post their company's open jobs for our Tillman Scholars? Can we do a day of community service with them with our Tillman Scholars? Can we host a TLI session with them for their veteran's ERG? Because of their annual, unwavering, faithful support of PTF, this is an indicator that someone may have the potential to be cultivated more to share new opportunities for additional touchpoints with PTF.

Level 3 - Elevating Level - Still staying with the same example as before, for the past year, our NYC development director has been meeting with Bob of Bob's House in NYC to see where his company may want to engage more with PTF either now or in the future and we have put them on a five-year plan for cultivation. We now have figured out that they would like 1 Tillman Scholar Speaker for lunch and learn each November around Veterans Day. They would like us to help them develop a Veterans Employee Resource Group in 2025, and in 2025, they would like to send four of their staff members to TLI programming. This is where we are elevating our partnership from the cultivation level to becoming a deeper engaged partner nearing trusted advisor status.

Level 5 - Premier Level - This would be defined as the "trusted advisor" relationships with external partners meeting monthly PTF. Keeping with the same corporate situation, besides doing all the things listed above, we are also now doing a corporate giving campaign; we are working with the Bob's House Foundation to establish an endowed gift with one of the University Partners that works with PTF, Bob hosted a Selection Committee for PTF in 2026 and has been a fantastic champion for us with the local media in the NYC area. This is the top tier of engagement an external partner can have with PTF.

As you can see from the demonstration above, this is how this model can be adapted for any internal and external relationship you want to deepen for the greater good of an organization. I am so very proud to work in a service organization that is committed to fostering honest and transparent relationship-building techniques and strategies. I anticipate the RMEE will be helpful in the future for a variety of fields.

<div align="center">

Researcher's Contributions

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The empirical finding of this research study is revolutionary in the field of external relationship management. I have broken down this section down into three areas of contributions; practical, theoretical, and managerial contributions to the field of higher education for future researchers to use and expand upon in future research studies.

Practical Contribution

As stated by one of the survey participants in the open-ended questions, some institutions have their own "homegrown" model of relationship management. However, from the existing literature reviewed, no other external engagement model has been designed with the intentionality to solve the root cause of relationship management challenges across campus, nor

has any other model been reviewed to explore if their model could be implemented at other universities or organizations. Not only does the Reaney Model of External Engagement (RMEE) have a model that can be easily used with defined levels, but it is also solving one of the root causes across campus which is having a common language across campus so the "leg foot" finally knows what the "Right foot" is doing. As I have been working on this research study over the past two years, many higher education organizations want to learn more as they are interested in learning how they can implement something like this at their company. From corporations, nonprofits, higher education, religious affiliations, and education - everyone needs guidance to find a system approach with guardrails for greater collaboration (Alvesson, 2003).

> The basic focus of this (research study) is how to use empirical work in a sophisticated and ambitious way. But sometimes, interesting research questions and strong theoretical ideas do not fit well with what we are able to study empirically. Perhaps we should be more prepared to let data abdicate its privileged position. (p. 30-29)

As a practitioner-scholar, I bring a theoretical and practical research contribution and knowledge to the field of higher education and beyond through this research study. As my contribution to the field of higher education, I bring a practical sense of defining external engagement from transactional to transformative through the utilization of the RMEE. This model can be used national and can be built upon for future research to explore their own needs and redefine additional contributions. Future researchers will be able to take this knowledge I have started and be able to continue on the action research study with the newly designed Reaney Model of External Engagement to test it within their own industries, whether it be higher education or, like me, within a nonprofit organization, and apply new findings with a new eye and a new lens based on what is going on in the world at that time.

As mentioned during Chapter Two, "the existing literature does not address how to continue the cultivation cycle from transactional to transformative partnerships" (p. 44). RMEE has directions with explanations to show pathways on how to move an external partner from transactional to transformative.

Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical contributions this research study brings to the field of higher education supports the practitioner-scholar voice within the "knowledge-creation" space of higher education. During the literature review, I noted there was no nationally recognized model that could be used widely for all campuses. My research study has filled a gap within the existing literature make this research study my contribution to the field of study. Now, there is a model with a framework that has been nationally tested and can be modified and retested within other spaces that connect with external partnerships.

Managerial Contributions

There is a managerial contribution I would like to add to the research study as well. Through the change management literature review in Chapter Two, I noted the internal challenges universities face when trying to get buy-in from all internal stakeholders. However, if a change management model was implemented through a successful training program to showcase the benefit to all internal stakeholders of RMEE, there should be more internal support.

<div align="center">

Future Lines of Inquire

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There are a few lines of inquire I would like to leave here for the next researcher who may pick up this research study after me. First, the lack of diversity in participants within the field of advancement is something that needs to be investigated. I believe having diversity of though would have made of rich conversation within the exploratory focus group and within the

feedback for the model. Second, I believe the next model needs to be concentrated with feedback from middle management. Middle management is the heart of the American workforce that manages up communication to senior leadership and manages down changes to lower-level staff members (Kiehne et al., 2017). If RMEE was being adopted within an organization, you would want middle management feedback, (via an exploratory focus group), and then feedback on usage (via the survey) and then share out to test (test the model), to see if this were something that could work at their institution.

Conclusion

The practitioner-scholar model has really grounded me in approaching my work with confidence in communicating the understanding of what I am talking about when it comes to presenting my observations notes and relating them to everyday situations. Just as an adjunct can bring more to the classroom knowledge through their work experience lens, so can a practitioner to the workforce. Throughout my administrative work in higher education, I can problem solve and see big-picture views of an organization's structure while understanding how day-to-day tasks connect for the greater good of the whole. That is my viewpoint as a practitioner-scholar. I bring the experience and the knowledge, unapologetically, without reservation, with curiosity, and with an open mind to explore the problems at hand and offer exploratory solutions to be tested, analyzed, evaluated with metrics, and redesigned to fit the current needs of the existing challenges of today.

I am grateful for this opportunity to test a model I created within the higher education space. The Reaney Model of External Engagement is just a steppingstone for higher education institutions to utilize for the greater good of the internal and external stakeholders they engage with. I fully intend to continue to develop this model and introduce it to higher education

institutions across the nation to support my current external work in the nonprofit sector and for

the greater good of university students and beyond. I am also excited to see how the RMEE can

be transformed for additional audiences, like nonprofit work, to suit their spaces for their

external audiences.

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The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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_____   _____
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