DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS AT A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY FOUR-YEAR BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTION

by

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DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS AT A

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation study to my husband, Jason R. Holloway. Your love, support, and belief in me have transformed my life, and I could not imagine a better partner than you. Our life together has grown since the day we met ten years ago in Cusco, Peru to starting a family and being fulfilled in every aspect of life today. Thank you for all you have done through our many transitions in the most recent years while I maintained focus on my studies. I am forever grateful for your love, and I look forward to a lifetime of happiness with you and our family. Let us continue writing our next chapter together. I love you!

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Thank you to the administrators and faculty of Innovative College. You opened your doors to me, and you showed me what innovation and a commitment to student

success looks like. I am inspired by the work you do, and I hope to implement your pioneer practices in my future work.

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ABSTRACT

KELLY LYNN HOLLOWAY
DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS AT A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY FOUR-YEAR BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTION
Under the direction of OLIVIA BOGGS, Ed.D.

The problem targeted by this study is the widening imbalance between admissions and graduation rates occurring at many long-standing institutions of higher education. This study applied the theory of disruptive innovation to gain insight into the policies, procedures, beliefs, and perspectives of how a single college that was established in the twenty-first century adopted and enacted practices necessary to maintain an institution with consistent retention and competitive graduation rates. The study used an explanatory, qualitative single case study design to collect and analyze the data. The data collection methods included semi-structured, open-ended interviews and a focus group, and the review of nine relevant documents. Participants included 8 administrators, 1 faculty participant, as well as 5 faculty participants in a focus group. The research questions asked about the perceptions and influence of the mission, vision, and operating principals at the twenty-first century institution built on an innovative model. Four salient themes emerged from the data including *Accessibility, Innovation, Attentiveness, and Student Success.* The researcher concluded that student success measures permeated the findings of this research study. Recommendations for further study include: a longitudinal study of Innovative College, the examination of long-standing institutions

that have adapted their cultures toward an accountable and innovative framework, an extension of this study to include student perceptions, and the examination of the effects of changes in leadership on the sustainability of Innovative College.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is facing substantial reform, as policies and politics have demanded a disruption to traditional operating models of long-standing institutional procedures to meet the growing insistence for convenience, accessibility, and affordability (Selingo, 2013b; Venit et al., 2013). Higher education's evolution in the past 150 years has transformed from restricted access for the elite, to the current period, which is characterized by a universal movement toward increased access for all (Altbach, 2010). At the turn of the twenty-first century, researchers and policymakers began scrutinizing the sustainability of higher education in relationship to quantity and quality of its services and the financial model in which it operates. In the past fifteen years, there have been significant developments in the way instructors teach, students learn, institutions are funded, and success is measured (Bass, 2012). This reform movement, called the College Completion Agenda (The College Board, 2011), has transformed the system from an inputs-based measure focused on access, to an outputs-based measure focused on degree attainment (Blum & Jarrat, 2013; B. M. B. Horn & Mackey, 2011; St. John, Duan-Barnett, & Moronski-Chapman, Karen, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

The problem targeted in this study is the widening imbalance between admissions and graduation rates occurring at many long-standing institutions of higher education.

National data confirm that these schools experienced a 9.8 percent enrollment growth from 2002 to 2007, yet the six-year graduation rates have remained relatively stagnant, with only a 2.2 percent growth from 57.2 percent for the 2002 cohort to 59.4 for the 2007 cohort (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Further, the 2014 six-year completion rate for the fall 2009 cohort was 52.9 percent, a decline of 2.1 percentage points from the fall 2008 cohort, and twice the rate of decline that was recorded for the 2007 cohort (Shapiro et al., 2015).

These challenges are particularly evident in the state of Georgia due to declining retention rates at in-state colleges and universities. The Georgia governor's office projects that by the year 2020, 60 percent of the in-state jobs will require a career certificate or college degree. Yet only 42 percent of young adult residents have a career certificate, an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree or higher (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2011). Table 1 illustrates findings from *Complete College Georgia Initiative* (2011) that documents significant declines in annual student retention between first, second, and third years of college matriculation in the state's four- and two-year institutions. Permission to use this table was granted by the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, as seen in Appendix E.

Table 1

Declining Student Retention in Georgia Colleges

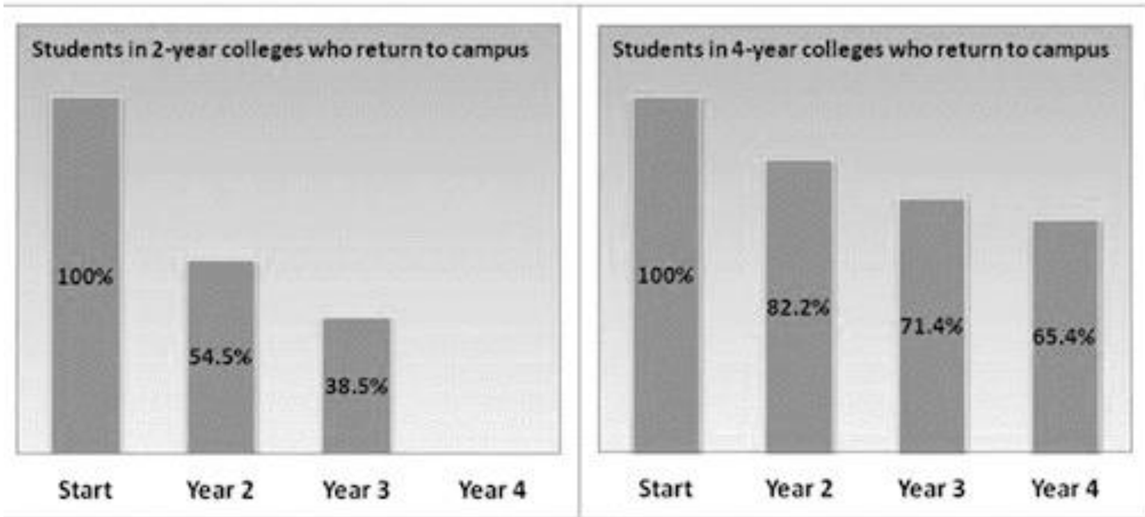

Table 1. Declining Student Retention in Georgia Colleges. (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2016, October, 2). Reprinted with permission. Retrieved from http://gosa.georgia.gov/

Purpose

Using case study methodology, the purpose of the study is apply the theory of disruptive innovation to gain insight into the policies, procedures, beliefs, and perspectives of how a single college that was established in the twenty-first century adopted and enacted policies necessary to maintain an institution with consistent retention and competitive graduation rates.

Background of the Study

When most students graduate from high school in the United States, the expectation is to continue immediately to a college or university in pursuit of higher learning. In fact, from 2002 to 2012, post-secondary enrollment grew by 24 percent from 16.6 million to 20.6 million according to the National Center for Education Statistics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015b) with much of the growth in full-time, first-time enrollment at 28 percent growth. According to Mackun and Wilson for the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), there were 181.4 million people in the U.S. in 2000, compared to 308.7 million in 2010. The increase in population, 9.7 percent, compared to the increase in higher education enrollment, 24 percent, suggests the proportion of individuals seeking higher education in the U.S. is rising. Furthermore, the NCES projects the rate of growth in 2012-2023 to shift slightly, with a projected increase of 12 percent for those under age 25 compared to 20 percent increase for students over the age of 25 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015b). Due largely to the Higher Education Act of 1965, which provided government subsidized financial aid, post-baccalaureate enrollment increased 34 percent from 1970 to 1984 with the majority of the increase in the early 1970s (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015b). Much of the growth during this period was due to veterans of World War II and their children through the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly referred to as the GI Bill (St. John et al., 2013).

With expansive enrollment growth, institutions of higher education are now serving a more diverse population of students with a myriad of backgrounds and needs. Altbach (2010) posited, "As access expands, inequalities within the higher education system also grow" (p. ix). Trends have shown a narrowing gap for African American students' degree attainment in public 4-year institutions. Further, inequalities remain for Hispanic students as economic and academic factors have contributed to the disparities across types of institutions with a larger representation of minority populations in less-selective and 2-year colleges (St. John et al., 2013).

In addition to swelling enrollments and diversity, higher education leaders, policymakers, and the public are considering how they will invest in the future of the United States (Hurlburt & Kirshtein, 2012). St. John, et. al. (2013) assert, “state and federal policymakers focus greater attention on degree completion, based upon the assumption that college-educated workers are more employable, earn a higher wage, are more civically engaged, and will contribute more to the tax base” (p. 107). While it is clear the investments in higher education are important to the state, local, and global workforce of the future, disparities remain in college affordability and, consequently degree completion.

Public discourse on affordability is one of the most salient issues in higher education today. Studies have found that institutional behaviors and resource allocation are key factors in college affordability. Chen and St. John (2011) studied the relationship between state funding, including both merit-based and needs-based aid, and college student outcomes at four-year institutions; the primary objective of the research was to compare results between various student subgroups. After controlling for all other factors, the researchers found substantial gaps in persistence among socioeconomic status (SES), with individuals at a high-SES having a 55 percent higher probability of persisting than their low-SES counterparts (Chen & St. John, 2011). Furthermore, less-selective institutions have a lower persistence rate than more selective institutions (Gansemer-Topf & Schuh, 2006; Pantuosco, Ullrich, & Pierce, 2013; Titus, 2006).

Federal investments in higher education are predominantly in the form of low-interest student loans rather than grants, work-study funds, and special interest programs, where the individual student is the beneficiary of the appropriations and the majority of the investment is to the student (St. John et al., 2013). State appropriations, however, are largely investments in public institutions and are left to the leaders to decide how to allocate funds according to their individual missions, with the goal of maintaining low tuition and providing equal access (Chen & St. John, 2011). The burden of financing higher education was once on the backs of taxpayers and has since shifted to the individual student (D. E. Heller, 2006). Several studies (Chen & St. John, 2011; Donald E. Heller, 2011; Weerts & Ronca, 2006) have indicated student and federal support per student has declined while the cost of tuition and fees has skyrocketed, causing the student a greater financial burden. Specifically, Weerts and Ronca (2006) found that state appropriations per student have declined 40 percent since 1978, during which this first phase of disruption to higher education access occurred. At the same time, tuition revenue per student has nearly doubled. The Delta Cost Project has documented that the shift of the student's financial burden has taken place across all sectors and types of higher education from two-year to four-year, private and public, and undergraduate and doctoral alike (Hurlburt & Kirshtein, 2012).

Studies have suggested improvements to make college more affordable with greater outcomes. Blum and Jarrat (2013) theorize, "By focusing resources on proven solutions to drive student retention and graduation rates, institutions can reduce costs to themselves, their students, and society at large" (p. 67-68). They suggest five strategies to improve student services while reducing cost: (1) focus on reducing the cost per degree earned; (2) focus resources with data-driven decisions; (3) invest in efficiency through technology and economics of scale; (4) account for the post-traditional student; and (5) leverage partnerships (Blum & Jarrat, 2013). Others suggest the "unbundling" of higher education to reduce overhead cost that does not specifically align with academic outcomes (LeBlanc, 2013; Levitz, Noel, & Richter, 1999; Staton, 2013). Christensen and Eyring (2011) contend that the modern university is operating three fundamentally different business models including a research facility which diagnoses problems and seeks to find solutions, an educational facility which adds value to the individual and the labor market, and a network of organizations such as athletic programs and dining facilities.

The aforementioned strategies to reduce cost may contradict what has been traditionally suggested in retention and persistence theories. Retention studies focus on students' persistence from their original institution with measurements on first-time, full-time students (Levitz et al., 1999) while persistence studies refer to student success to degree attainment (E.T. Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Tinto and Bean theorize that student engagement and integration, both academic and social, positively relate to student success (Bean, 1982; Hossler, D., Bean, J.P., 1990; Tinto, 1975, 1982, 1993, 2006). Students who live on campus, are involved with campus activities, engaged with faculty both inside and outside of the classroom, and perform well academically are more likely to persist to graduation (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1975, 1982). Astin (1984) describes his theory of student involvement as the "quantity and quality of the psychical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience" (p. 528). Astin (1984) suggests the effectiveness of any policy or practice is directly related to the level of student involvement. Therefore, the suggestion is made to university leaders and that student involvement should be considered when developing and implementing changes

(Astin, 1984). Levitz, Noel, & Richter (1999) claim, "Student persistence to the completion of educational goals is a key indicator of student success" (p. 31).

Not only are researchers in the field of educational leadership suggesting improvements to student success, a national movement has ensued and can be characterized as a disruptive innovation. The U.S. Department of Education, under the leadership of the Spellings Commission issued a report in 2006, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of Higher Education*, to raise important issues in higher education. The report suggests that the American higher education system is good, but it is a "mature enterprise" that is risk-averse (US Department of Education, 2006); "We remained so far ahead of our competitors for so long, however, that we began to take our postsecondary superiority for granted. The results of this inattention, though little known to our fellow citizens, are sobering" (p. ix). Consequently, the United States was once first in educational attainment among industrialized nations, and today it is ranked twelfth with many other countries close on its heels including the Netherlands and Belgium. The report suggested improvements in access, affordability, quality, and accountability as remedies to the growing problem (US Department of Education, 2006).

A few years later, former president Barack Obama charged the nation with even greater accountability during his inaugural address when he set an ambitious goal: "By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world". The former president continued, "In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer a pathway to opportunity—it is a prerequisite" (Obama, 2009). Following the presidential charge, the U.S. Department of Education under the leadership of former secretary Arne Duncan issued the *College Completion Tool Kit* which outlined seven strategies for governors to consider in their states as they work to improve completion rates. Economic incentives to raise the current rate of completion, which is approximately 59 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015a) include greater tax revenue, a more skilled workforce, and greater quality of life (US Department of Education, 2006). The strategies set forth for Governors are as follows: (US Department of Education, 2011, p. 4).

1. Set Goals; Develop an Action Plan
2. Embrace Performance-Based Funding
3. Align High School Standards with College Entrance and Placement Standards
4. Make it Easier for Students to Transfer
5. Use Data to Drive Decision Making
6. Accelerate Learning and Reduce Costs
7. Target Adults, especially those with “Some College, but No Degree”

The aforementioned problems of higher education in regards to access, affordability, accountability, and student success suggest that the United States higher education system is ripe for disruption. Christensen and Eyring (2011) assert traditional strategic adaptations to incremental innovation, what they term “sustaining innovations,” are no longer enough when dealing with today’s crisis in higher education. Instead, they believe the emerging challenges such as online education are disruptive innovations in higher education, and the traditional institutions must reshape mindsets and actions or they could become obsolete (C. M. Christensen & Eyring, 2011). A decade ago, the Spellings Commission saw this need for change, and it continues today; “this new landscape demands innovation and flexibility from the institutions that serve the nation's learners" (US Department of Education, 2006, p. ix).

Research Questions

This qualitative research study will be guided by the following two research questions:

1. In what ways have greater accountability measures of retention and completion rates influenced the mission, vision, and operating principles of a higher education institution established in the twenty-first century?
2. How do faculty, leaders, and staff from an institution that demonstrates disruptive innovation perceive accountability measures that positively relate to student retention and completion rates?

Theoretical Foundation

This study will be guided by Clayton Christensen's theory of disruptive innovation which is the "process by which a product or service takes root initially in simple applications at the bottom of a market and then relentlessly moves up market, eventually displacing established competitors" (C. M. Christensen, 2015, p. 1). In this study, the long-standing institutions of higher education can be seen as sustaining innovations, according to Christensen, which do not seek new markets or value networks. Instead, they continuously improve in competition with other institutions for a similar pool of students (C. M. Christensen, 1997). In contrast, the four-year baccalaureate institution that was established in the past decade with a focus on accountability and student success can be seen as a disruptive innovation in the field of higher education

(Bass, 2012; C. M. Christensen & Eyring, 2011). The disruptive innovation appeals to what was once a non-consumer by entering the market at a lower cost with a new value proposition. In the instance of the institution of study and their website, the tuition and fees are comparably very low for the geographical competition, the institution emphasizes the use of technology and active-learning environments, provides access to economically demanding bachelor's degrees, and is above national averages in student outcomes (C. M. Christensen & Eyring, 2011).

Significance of the Study

Findings of this study may provide college and university administrators and policymakers with information for shaping the culture of an institution around the increased regulatory environment of accountability in higher education. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of the establishment and of a higher education institution in the twenty-first century should provide leaders transferable practices to both new and existing institutions to instill a culture of accountability and student success where both students and faculty are engaged in the educational process.

Higher education leaders must respond to the increased global competitiveness for a qualified workforce where the United States now stands at twelfth globally in tertiary degree attainment (Education, 2006, 2011; Selingo, 2013a). Furthermore, the rising cost of attendance (Staton, 2013) and the greater emphasis on accountability measures (St. John et al., 2013) are signifying the need for change to the current higher education model. This study intends to contribute to the literature by examining what and how a 4-year, public baccalaureate institution established in the twenty-first century will operate with their founding mission and culture focused on student success. The findings could inform higher education leaders' behaviors, including presidents, provosts, and members of enrollment management, and the findings could influence policymakers to enact policies and procedures conducive to student success. Furthermore, the study could inform students and parents as they weigh options for educational attainment.

Procedures

This case study examined the theory of disruptive innovation in an institution established in the twenty-first century whose mission is in line with what research suggests as the new, more accountable, less affordable, more efficient, and higher quality institution with a focus on student success. Institutional behaviors were examined and the researcher reviewed policies, procedures, programs, and perceptions for adherence to the Complete College Agenda at a 4-year baccalaureate institution established in the twenty-first century. The Complete College Agenda was produced by the U.S. Department of Education and outlines strategies for Governors and higher education leaders to increase degree completion rates to regain its position as the number one nation with the highest percentage of degree-holders for adults 25-34 years old (US Department of Education, 2011). Furthermore, this study explored college administrators' and faculty's experiences regarding the developmental process of the institutional mission, vision, and operating principles focused on student success as measured by IPEDS retention data.

Approval from Mercer University's Institutional Review Board was first obtained prior to any data collection. The research method was a single-case study of a higher education institution established in the twenty-first century whose mission is to provide access to career-focused baccalaureate and associate degree programs that meet the economic demands of the state and region. The researcher contacted the Office of Institutional Effectiveness first to seek permission and access to conduct the study. The researcher also contacted a key informant of the institution to discuss the study's purpose and how the positive organizational culture and behaviors could be transferred to new and existing institutions seeking adaptation to increased regulations for retention and completion rates, or what is referred to as "outputs" in higher education.

Setting

The institution was selected using three criteria. First, the institution was established in the first decade of the twenty-first century and is now only approximately 10 years old; therefore, the culture is still in a formative stage. Second, the mission of the institution is built largely on the definition of disruptive innovation as they seek to use innovative technologies and adaptive, active-learning environments to enrich the education of students at the lowest cost for public schools in the state. Third, though historical data is limited due to its recent establishment, the institution boasts above national averages for retention rates for less selective institutions.

Furthermore, innovative use of technology for teaching and learning is paramount to the vision of the institution as well as a commitment to a dynamic learning environment where faculty engage and mentor to develop the whole student. They seek to be a model for innovative approaches to higher education in the twenty-first century with high levels of student and faculty engagement and efficiencies. The institution has seen substantial growth with over 10,000 students in the first decade of operation as they seek to be a driving force for change in student success. This study's circumstances are *critical* in regards to representing a critical test of the theory of disruptive innovation and *unusual* in that the single-case is an institution established in the twenty-first century (Creswell, 2015). This organizational theory will be explored in the single case to provide an analytical generalization on the findings (Yin, 2014).

Interviews

The researcher conducted in-person, semi-structured interviews with 8 senior leaders within the institution, including three academic deans, the Provost, Chief of Staff, Dean of Students, an Associate Provost, and an Executive Director. Additionally, an instructor was interviewed in lieu of a cancelled focus group. Semi-structured interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for data analysis (Brinkmann & Kavale, 2015).

Focus Groups

Additionally, the researcher contacted faculty members via email and word-of-mouth through academic deans to participate in a focus group. The goal of the researcher was to understand the lived experiences of the faculty at the institution and their interpretation of the mission for student success. The researcher served as a moderator to the discussion, "deliberately trying to surface the views of each person in the group" (Yin, 2014, p. 111). Five participants were gathered in a room with the researcher as the moderator to discuss issues for approximately 76 minutes in a nondirective, open discussion format (Neuman, 2011).

Document Review

Simultaneously, the researcher reviewed documents inclusive of institutional policies, programs, and practices, including the institution's website, campus resources, as well findings of the NSSE data. These were in the forms of websites, university brochures, and campus publications. Document review in qualitative research provides descriptive and historical information relevant to the research questions that may not be found in interviews or focus groups (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Neuman, 2011). Documents also allow the researcher to track change and development as well as verify findings in other methods or sources (Bowen, 2009). Particularly salient documents to review included the institution's mission, vision, operating principles, and history and employee guidebooks.

Analysis

Data was analyzed using the NVivo qualitative analysis software package produced by QSR International. According to Yin, "data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence, to produce empirically based findings" (2014, p. 132). The general strategy of the researcher was to rely on the theoretical proposition of Christensen's theory of disruptive innovation (Yin, 2014). The interview and focus group transcriptions as well as the document review were examined for relational codes and follow what Grbich (2013) describes as thematic analysis. A summary of the steps includes: reviewing the database; recalling research questions, theoretical framework, methodology, and review of literature; color- coding key segments and writing descriptive comments to the side; grouping like segments; attaching overarching labels; and finally, conceptualizing groupings and links to literature and theory (Grbich, 2013). The researcher sought to directly interpret the single instance, in this case the twenty-first century higher education institution, to draw meaning (Creswell, 2013).

Limitations

The authenticity of participant's responses is assumed but unknown. Given the sensitivity of outcomes and political scrutiny for leaders of an institution of higher education seeking to disrupt the current system of higher education, the Hawthorne Effect may arise in the study. Bryant (2004) describes the Hawthorne Effect as the response the participants have when improvements or modifications are made in behaviors and discussion due to the fact that they are being studied. The researcher ensured anonymity of the participants as well as the institution itself in an effort to decrease the Hawthorne Effect and solicit organic, truthful responses in the interviews and focus groups. Furthermore, the interviewees were informed of how this study can continue to a growing body of literature on student success and accountability measures.

Delimitations

The most obvious delimitation of this study is the selection of a single-case study of a less-selective institution of higher education that was established at the turn of the twenty-first century when policy and politics focused on student outcomes rather than the previously salient focus of access. This restricted the extent to which a wider range of institutions may apply findings of the study to their college settings. This institution was specifically chosen because it expounds the theory of disruptive innovation in higher education as a new institution that was established with a focus on student outcomes. Contrary to long-standing institutions that are now being mandated to change and adapt practices and policies to meet the newly established accountability measures, this institution was established and is now operating with a culture and mission of accountability and student success.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions will assist in the understanding of this study.

Accountability: an issue in higher education "focused not only on what colleges and universities do but also on how well they do it and what resources they use" (Donald E. Heller, 2011, p. 3).

Cohort Graduation Rate: the percentage of an entering class that graduates within three years with an associate's degree, and within four, five, or six years with a baccalaureate degree (Levitz et al., 1999).

Disruptive Innovation: the process in which a product or service is initially developed as a simplistic application at the bottom of the market and consistently moves up in the market, eventually displacing the establishing competitors; appeals initially to the non-consumer because it is typically offered at a less-expensive cost and does not have all the applications or services of the initial competitor (C. M. Christensen, 1997; C. M. Christensen & Eyring, 2011).

Persistence: "the process of educational attainment inclusive of transfer" (St. John et al., 2013, p. 106).

Retention: "the percentage of first-time, full-time freshman who return to the same institution for the second term or second year of study" (Levitz et al., 1999, p. 32).

Sustaining Innovation: the process in which a product or service sustains in the market by enhancing performance and price in order to compete with others already in the market; the sustaining innovation is at risk of a disruptive innovation (C. M. Christensen, 1997; C. M. Christensen & Eyring, 2011).

Student Success: students persisting to their educational goals (Levitz et al., 1999).

Summary

The paradigm of success has shifted in the past decade across institutions of higher education as the demand for reform is no longer concentrated on access, but now focused on accountability and student success. As higher education enrollments have multiplied and continue to have a higher rate of accessibility, institutions are facing greater accountability measures focused on retention and graduation rates which have only marginally increased. This problem is important to examine for the good of the individual seeking higher education, the institution's success measures, and society at-large as investments are made in the future workforce. Solutions exist with innovative missions, visions, and operating principles for disruptive innovations in higher education rather than clinging to the status quo, or what can be termed sustaining innovations. This single-case study seeks to contribute to the literature on disruptive innovation in higher education and the accountability movement. The current regulatory environment posits that higher education is ripe for disruption; therefore, the researcher seeks to study the paradigm shift from an inputs model of success to an outputs model.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education in recent decades has grown tremendously due in a large part to the public demand for and policymakers' commitment to innovation and expanding the nation's economy. Policy and financial resources have been intended to "meet workforce needs, improve the financial and social mobility of individuals and families, reduce discrimination and inequality, and develop a better-educated citizenry" (Jones, 2013, p. 1). Though substantial progress has been made to expand postsecondary education attainment, disparities still remain which prevent individuals and society at-large from realizing the maximum benefit of higher education (A. Carnevale & Rose, 2011; Jones, 2013). According to Heller (2011) three core issues are the focal point in higher education discourse, including access, affordability, and accountability. This review of literature will synthesize these three issues in addition to the complete college agenda and the theory of disruptive innovation. The literature is organized from broad issues that contribute to the problem to the direct theory that supports this research.

Access

Institutions of higher education are often seen as the catalyst for a better life for the individual as well as having far-reaching benefits for society. Baum, Ma, and Payea (2013) have shown the more one advances one's education, the better quality of life one will live, including higher earning potential, higher life expectancies, fewer demands on social services, and a better-skilled and more adaptable workforce. In the years immediately following the recession of 2007, individuals with college degrees had the greatest chances of being hired and the lowest rates of unemployment (A. P. Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010). Furthermore, a more educated society has significant benefits, including lower crime rates, higher tax opportunities, and advances in health and enterprise (Baum et al., 2013).

Expansion of higher educational institutions in the United States has occurred despite the economic downturn and scrutiny of the industry. Johnson (2013) found there is a greater call for accountability at both the federal and state level which call for more institutional resources dedicated to collecting, analyzing, and recording larger data sets which may not affect the bottom line of student success. In the 2011-2012 academic year, and the most current NCES report, there were a total of 4,706 degree-granting institutions of higher education, up from 4,197 in 2001-2002 and 3,559 in 1990-1991—an increase of 12 percent in the last decade and 32 percent in the past twenty-one years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015b). In addition to the double-digit growth in the number of institutions of higher education, the number of students enrolled has also increased during the same decade from 2001 to 2011 by 35 percent from approximately 13,155,000 to 17,732,000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). These trends suggest the college enrollment process has become more commonplace, shifting from a place once "reserved for a relatively small fraction of the population, something of a social and academic elite, to one frequented by a broad cross-section of students" (Kim & Rury, 2007, p. 305). This section of the review of literature will look further at the history and policies surrounding access in higher education, research about individuals including gender, class, and race, and state-specific research on access.

The Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 and its subsequent revisions are the landmark pieces of legislation that have guided much of higher education reform in the last half-century. The goal was to generate a more educated citizenry that would drive innovation and spur economic development from the industrial revolution. Former President Lyndon B. Johnson and Congress appropriated approximately $804 billion with clear intent: “higher education [should] remain a federal concern but a state responsibility” (Prisco, Hurley, Carton, & Richardson, 2002, p. 3). The investment helped subsidize “community service and continuing education; library assistance, training, and research; strengthening developing institutions, student assistance, teacher programs, and facilities construction” (Prisco et al., 2002, p. 3). Since its inception, the HEA is to be reauthorized every six years in order to evaluate and modify programs to reflect the changing needs of higher education and national priorities (Capt, 2013). By the 1998 reauthorization, the HEA accounted for 74 percent of all available aid for students. This landmark piece of legislation facilitated more open access to higher education than ever before and its reauthorizations continue to do so.

Not only were more institutions chartered to provide more geographic access, financial support extended higher education opportunities to those who were not able to pay for their education up front (St. John et al., 2013). Additionally, low-interest and subsidized loans were developed along with grants for those in financial need to attend college with less of a financial burden. An individual who sought higher education prior to the HEA would have had to pay the full tuition, fees, room, and board at the time of enrollment. A middle-class family income was unlikely to afford this luxury. With the country's financial investment, the United States once had more citizens enrolled or more who have earned a post-secondary degree in comparison to its population than any other across the globe. Today, the United States seeks to regain that position with a focus on access and degree attainment (Board, 2011).

While the Higher Education Act of 1965 provided access to the general public, the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly referred to as the GI Bill, provided incentive and financial support for veterans returning from war and seeking to re-enter the workforce. Veterans were afforded an opportunity to advance their skills and knowledge with post-secondary education to enter fields such as education, business, and health care when they may have otherwise sought waning industrialized jobs. Two entities, the Conference on Postwar and Readjustment of Civilian and Military Personnel as well as the Armed Forces Committee on Post-War Educational Opportunities for Service Personnel, were instrumental in studying how to prepare for a peacetime economy after the Second World War as a result of past experience of inadequate transition for veterans of World War I (Strach, 2009).

In addition to the federal government supporting access to higher education with federal student financial aid and military benefits, the individual states have established policy and practice to follow suit. The states have long been the central policy and decision makers in higher education because of the decentralized nature of the industry (Chen & St. John, 2011). At the federal level, need-based aid is awarded most frequently to the individual according to the FAFSA, and merit-based aid is most often awarded from the state initiatives. Furthermore, states have the greatest responsibility in funding higher education at the institutional level (Hauptman, 2011). Some states take this responsibility a step further with dedicated funding sources such as the lottery supported HOPE Scholarship, or Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally, in Georgia where students can earn up to full tuition and fees scholarships or grants at public institutions which substantially contributes to college affordability in the state.

Affordability

Concerns about college affordability are prevalent for students, parents, legislatures, college administrators, and the general public as news headlines continue to create awareness of this pervasive issue in higher education. The state and federal government has faced increased pressure to fund competing programs, such as Medicaid, while recovering from the most recent recession. Heller’s (2011) research shows that despite the rising costs of a college education, the public still sees the value in a college education, and enrollment has increased.

Mumper and Freeman (2011) studied the paradox of rising tuition prices at public institutions. Though significant research has been conducted on this problem, the researchers (Conner & Rabovsky, 2011; D. E. Heller, 2006; Donald E. Heller, 2011; Staton, 2013) found there were many explanations and no clear conclusion despite the shared concern over the issue. In one of the first comprehensive studies to explain the causes of tuition increases, Hauptman (2011) summarized his research by stating that, "the bottom line is that there is no overarching explanation" for college tuition inflation (p. vii). Since then, researchers have studied several iterations of why college costs have risen. Mumper and Freeman (2011) found five meta-narratives policymakers and higher education leaders use when explaining the causal relationships for tuition increases.

Their findings will guide this section of the literature review with supporting literature for each narrative.

The first narrative places blame on the state for not appropriating adequate revenue to the public institutions, causing tuition prices to increase to keep a balanced operating budget. In this view, Mumper and Freeman (2011, p. 43) summarize, "if you accept that colleges only have two major revenue sources, tuition and state appropriations, and that institutional expenditures are fixed, tuition becomes a variable in a simple algebraic problem. If appropriations go down or increase more slowly than expenditures, tuition must go up to keep the equation in balance." A more recent report by the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) (2014, p. 2) (GAO) found: "From fiscal years 2003 through 2012, state funding for all public colleges decreased, while tuition rose. Specifically, state funding decreased by 12 percent overall while median tuition rose 55 percent across all public colleges." State legislatures are challenged by competing funding priorities, and in this narrative, one can conclude that tuition will continue to increase if state appropriations do not match their percentage of the public institutions' operating budgets.

The second narrative, according to Mumper and Freeman (2011) also focuses on changing state support, but it places blame on competing programs such as Medicaid, asserting that higher education has been crowded out of state appropriations, resulting in a forced increase in tuition. The researchers cite this narrative as "the result of choices made by legislators and governors and even the public" (Mumper & Freeman, 2011, p. 45). A component of this narrative to examine is whether legislators and the public view higher education as a public or private good. Selingo (Selingo, 2013a, p. 23) contends, "Lawmakers increasingly view higher education as a private good that should be supported by students and donors, rather than as a public good that deserves state support." The difference in support, according to the states, is that higher education has a way to generate revenue, whereas corrections, transportation, and Medicaid do not. In the National Association of State Budget Officers' State Expenditure Report (2016), the research showed a five percent increase in state funding for higher education from 2015 to 2016. Additionally, higher education took a slightly larger slice of the pie, with 10 percent in total general fund spending compared to 9.6 the previous year. More than a decade prior to this report, higher education accounted for 10.9 percent of the general funding. In comparison, however, Medicaid increased its spending by 15.1 percent from 2013 to 2014, namely due to federal funds for the Affordable Care Act. In the general fund, Medicaid accounted for 25.6 percent in 2014 compared to 22.3% in 2004 (The National Association of State Budget Officers, 2004). While there are competing priorities in the state budget allocations, one can discern higher education is proportionality meeting the status quo in state support.

The next two narratives point the blame on the rising cost of college tuition on the institutions with the first of these being placed on the expectation of increased quality of programs. Mumper and Freeman (2011) see this narrative as black and white: "Public colleges and universities are faced with a choice: either spend the money needed to keep up or fall behind" (p. 48). Competition to recruit and retain quality students today means more than the academic program. It also includes the quality of life expenditures such as residence halls, recreational facilities, food courts, and state of the art classrooms that contribute to the rising cost of tuition and fees. Other areas of expenditure that are not as easily seen include campus safety, administrative staff, technology, and deferred maintenance (M. B. Horn & Kelly, 2015). Some question whether or not the increased spending translates into more than increased recruitment. Pantuosco, Ullrich, and Pierce (2013) studied whether the level of spending in public institutions correlated with the number of bachelor's degrees conferred and educational attainment. The researchers found the spending increases in their sample did not display a significant effect on educational attainment; however, they found the larger number of higher education institutions in a state positively impacted the number of degrees earned (Pantuosco et al., 2013). Although the researchers found state spending has increased, they believe it was for non-academic expenditures.

Mumper and Freeman's (2011) fourth narrative cites the colleges and their leaders themselves for the rising cost of public higher education. They state, "in this view, as the goods and services that colleges must purchase increased in price, those institutions should be more responsible; they should control their spending rather than simply continuing past purchasing patterns" (Mumper & Freeman, 2011, p. 51). This view brings to light the competing priorities of campus leaders and faculty for research and national rankings, versus legislators and the general public's concern for quality undergraduate education. When evaluating this narrative with a business lens, Staton (2013) proclaims higher education needs to "unbundle" the components of the college experience to make it more affordable. He reinforces Christensen's argument that institutions are expected to operate three business models (C. Christensen, Horn, Caldera, & Soares, 2011). Staton summarizes, "A university has to be a research facility that collects specialists to diagnose problems and find solutions, serve students and add value to their lives and to their ability in turn to add value to the labor market, and facilitate a network of organizations, athletic programs, faculty, graduate students, and alumni" (2013, p. 105). With these three competing priorities, campus leaders are charged with keeping the cost down while increasing the services in all areas.

The final narrative Mumper and Freeman (2011) present is the notion that tuition increases cause a misguided assumption that college is thus less affordable. Despite the rise in tuition across public institutions, enrollment has increased 24 percent between 2002 and 2012, adding an additional 4 million students to the roster (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015a). Mumper and Freeman state, "Tuition increases are actually a good idea—as long as they are matched with financial aid, including scholarships, for poor students" (2011, p. 55). They continue to explain that students may elect a different route to their 4-year degree than originally planned due to price; they may elect to attend a community college or a college where they can live at home, but until there is a decrease in overall enrollment at public colleges, college prices aren't as large of a concern as the media portrays them to be.

In a national survey of public attitudes on higher education, researchers at the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education acknowledged the anxiety of paying for college, but at the same time found they are willing to invest in a college education: "The number of people who think that a higher education is absolutely necessary for success has jumped dramatically, up from 31 percent as recently as 2000 to 55 percent in our last two studies, in 2008 and 2009" (B. J. Immerwahr, Johnson, Ott, & Rochkind, 2010, p. 3). In a different study by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, the researchers conducted more than two-dozen individual one-hour interviews with college presidents to understand their perspective on the major issues in higher education. When it came to costs, presidents acknowledged there was a problem, but most agreed it was an investment worth paying for when considering potential earnings after graduation and comparative costs such as daycare (J. Immerwahr, Johnson, & Gasbarra, 2008). According to the NCES annual "Condition of Education" in 2017, the "median earnings of young adults (25-34) with a bachelor's degree ($50,000) were 64 percent higher than those of young adult high school completers ($30,500).young adults age 25-34 years old with a bachelor's degree in 2015" (McFarland, Hussar, de Brey, & Snyder, 2017, p. 57). Additionally, bachelor's degree holders age 25 to 34 employment rate that was 88 percent in 2015 compared to 69 percent for high school completers (McFarland et al., 2017). These statistics suggest the financial investment in higher education, although rising, still has a higher than average return.

Accountability

The three major issues in higher education--access, affordability, and accountability--continue to expand in discussion and research. Most recently the topic of accountability, with an emphasis on efficiency and outcomes, has surfaced to the top of these issues as state, federal, and public discourse have demanded a paradigm shift (Zumeta & Kinne, 2011). Today the six-year graduation rate for those seeking a bachelor's degree hovers just over 50 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015a). This statistic has caused educators and policymakers to give more attention to accountability, as access is no longer sufficient in preparing our next generation's workforce. According to Heller (2011), institutions of higher education must emphasize successful completion and learning. This section of the literature review will trace the evolution of accountability and will provide a personal reflection on accountability in the researcher's profession.

Traditional modules of governance did not exist in the early stages of the evolution of higher education in the United States. Instead, the institutions received grants of land or money from the colonial government in order to establish themselves; accountability, in a much smaller form, was appointed to legislators or institutional governing boards (Trow, 1993). The next substantial period in the evolution of accountability is the Morrill Act, which was passed by Congress in 1982. The Morrill Act provided money and land grants to states in order to establish state institutions that focused on the agricultural and mechanical arts. Accountability was in the form of legal and fiduciary authority boards of trustees (Trow, 1993).

In the latter half of the twentieth century, faculty governance played an integral role in the accountability measures of American higher education. In 1966, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges (AAC) had a turning point in establishing a stronger faculty governance by successfully drafting the *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*, which recognized the "desirability of affording the faculty a major role in institutional governance" (Gerber, 2014, p. 59). After the Second World War through the mid 1970's, university enrollment swelled with the adoption of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known as the G.I. Bill, and the professoriate was soaring in prestige across higher education institutions. Movements for academic freedom and the tenure system prevailed, and faculty was entrenched in shared governance of institutions; their power in decision-making was expanded to include hiring practices, strategic plans, and budgetary allocations (American Association of University Professors, 2001; Gerber, 2014).

Since then, shared governance has shifted as institutions of higher education have become operationally closer to corporations (Stensaker & Vabø, 2013). Tendencies and thought-processes of faculty members and administrators have shifted from a shared governance model to that of a hierarchical model where faculty are no longer employed simply by the institutions but also by the administrators who lead the institution. Faculty's ability to make the hard, business-oriented decisions, such as closing programs and letting go of faculty colleagues for the financial health of the institution, are in question in the current status of shared governance (Taylor, 2013). Furthermore, as retention and graduation rates are under intense scrutiny due to the proposed link to funding, faculty are under the microscope for the student life cycle and the new accountability measures (Stensaker & Vabø, 2013; Taylor, 2013).

Accreditation

The last component of the evolution of accountability is the accreditation movement. In the late 19^{th} and early 20^{th} centuries, six independent regional accreditation agencies were created to carry the primary responsibilities of certifying academic quality and enforcing standards (Zumeta & Kinne, 2011). In the beginning states of accreditation, accountability measures relied on institutional compliance reporting where access was reported by race and ethnicity, while efficiency was measured by credit outputs (Ewell & Jones, 2006). The audit practice in higher education, known as accreditation, continues today at both the institutional and programmatic level (Massey, 2005). Institutions are required by the federal government to partake in this process to primarily assess academic standings and student learning outcomes. Accreditation standards are the ticket to federal student financial aid, which, for the majority of institutions, is the life-blood of their existence (Burke, 2005). In addition to the connection to federal aid, accreditation standards seek to assess learning outcomes, the pursuit of institutional mission statements, and the financial health of the institution. Campus leaders often develop task forces in preparation for an accreditation audit that can take years to prepare and complete for the once a decade requirement (Wood, 2006). The U.S. Department of Education affirms the connection between accreditation, outcomes, and the need for innovation: "the focus on outcomes is essential to increase the rigor of accreditation and to provide the flexibility that can foster the innovation we need in higher education in order to serve all students well" (Mitchell, 2016).

Complete College Agenda

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, policymakers and the public at-large began shifting attention in higher education to the less than stellar trajectory the nation was on. The Spellings Commission rattled the industry with its 2006 report *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of Higher Education*, which started with brief positivity of the success of higher education over the past 300 years, then quickly cut to the "uneasy conclusion that the sector's past attainments have led our nation to unwarranted complacency about its future" (Education, 2006, p. xi). Extending the grim reality of higher education in the United States, the report proclaims, "In tomorrow's world a nation's wealth will derive from its capacity to educate, attract, and retain citizens who are able to work smarter and learn faster—making educational achievement ever more important both for individuals and for society writ large" (2006, p. xii).

The year following this report, the College Board formed the Commission on Access, Admissions, and Success in Higher Education in order to study the "educational pipeline" of P-16 problems in order to find solutions to increase the percentage of students who graduate college and enter the twenty-first century workforce prepared to succeed (Board, 2008, 2011; Hughes, 2012). The Commission's report defines a "clear and ambitious" goal to address the findings that the United States has slipped from number two in the world for young adults (age 25-34) holding a bachelor's degree to number eleven (Board, 2008). To combat the slip in global competitiveness, the Commission proclaims that by the year 2025, the United States should increase the number of 25-34 year olds with an Associate's degree or higher to 55 percent of the population. According to the Commission, the goal can be obtained by increasing one percent a year and following their 10-part action agenda (Board, 2008).

The College Board and the National Conference of State Legislatures produced a guide for state policymakers to pursue the Commission's recommendations. The 10 recommendations by the Commission range from early education to college affordability and dropout prevention. The 10 recommendations are as follows (Board, 2008, p. 21, 2011):

1. Provide a program of voluntary preschool education, universally available to children from low-income families.
2. Improve middle and high school college counseling.
3. Implement the best research-based dropout prevention programs.

4. Align the K-12 education system with international standards and college admissions expectations.
5. Improve teacher quality and focus on recruitment and retention.
6. Clarify and simplify the admissions process.
7. Provide more need-based grant aid while simplifying and making financial aid processes more transparent.
8. Keep college affordable.
9. Dramatically increase college completion rates.
10. Provide postsecondary opportunities as an essential element of adult education programs.

In former president Obama's first State of the Union address in 2009, he brought national attention to the College Complete Agenda by setting an ambitious goal for the United States to regain its place as the country with the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. Obama continued: "In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity—it is a prerequisite" (Obama, 2009). The discussion of college completion heightened, and in 2011, the U.S. Department of Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, published the *College Completion Toolkit* to help governors and implement strategies to increase the college completion rates in their states. The toolkit begins with the grave future for the United States based on the economic outlook and charges Governors to implement the seven strategies beginning with setting a plan with specific goals. The strategies continue to suggest implementing performance-based funding, aligning high school and college curriculum, supporting transfer students, using data for decision-making, accelerating learning while reducing costs, and targeting adult students who have started college but have not graduated (Education, 2011).

In addition to the Department of Education and the College Board, several other large foundations have committed to the College Completion Agenda. Most notably, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation have committed significant resources to dozens of initiatives across the United States. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation focuses on higher education student success that contributes to economic development and social mobility (The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015). They have funded dozens of projects to increase productivity of higher education and increase completion rates by creating university and organizational partnerships. These partnerships seek to address issues such as: improving data collection, increasing financial aid access and knowledge, planning pathways for student success, and personalizing learning. The Lumina Foundation is an “independent, private foundation committed to increasing the proportion of Americans with degrees, certificates and other high-quality credentials to 60 percent by 2025” (2016, p. 211). They produce an annual report on their outcomes-based approach of building an accountable, equitable and responsive higher education system in the United States. According to their 2016 report, the degree and certificate rate is increasing, with the overall postsecondary attainment rate at 45.3 percent of adults aged 25-64 in the United States population. According to their projections, however, the country will fall short of their goal by 10.9 million people, landing at 53.9 percent. In order to help bridge that gap, the Foundation plans to focus on underrepresented groups attaining postsecondary education credentials as well as a learning system for 27 million working adults to complete the degrees they have started

(2016). Their report provides detailed demographic and geographic data on degree attainment in order to help benchmark the progress and develop solutions for degree attainment.

Since the U.S. Department of Education's Toolkit and the College Board's recommendations, significant progress has been made, but not without challenges. The timing of this movement happened during a severe economic downturn, which led many state budget shortfalls for P-12 and higher education subsidies (Chen & St. John, 2011; Delaney & Doyle, 2011). Furthermore, college access continues to be stratified by race, socioeconomic status, and parents' educational attainment (Callan, 2011; Donald E. Heller, 2011; Jones, 2013; Ross, Kena, Rathbun, Kristapovich, & Manning, 2012). For those who do attend college, a report conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (Sparks, Malkus, (ED), & Research, 2013) found approximately 20 percent of first-year students who enrolled in higher education began their education with remedial courses. These issues, among others, can be seen as the reason the U.S. has not yet come close to achieving the forthright goals.

The Association of American Colleges & Universities critiqued the College Completion Agenda, summarizing its purpose to "collect more and better data about students' educational progress toward degrees, to enact new policies that incentivize increased graduation rates and improve the efficiency of degree production, and to tie funding to increased completion rates" (Humphreys, 2012, p. 8). Humphreys continues to say "it has become too narrowly focused; whereas society and the economy need 'more and *better*,' while policy leaders are trying to deliver 'more and *cheaper*'" (2012, p. 8). The argument is a quality shortfall with two dimensions. First, too few students are making adequate progress in learning outcomes, and second, an increasingly complex and globalized workforce demands a well-educated workforce. Arum and Roksa studied how much the American college student is actually learning, and they concluded, “the answer for many undergraduates, we have concluded, is not much” (2011, p. 34). The researchers conducted a longitudinal study of over 2,300 traditional undergraduate students enrolled across a spectrum of four-year colleges or universities. They administered the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) which consists of three open-ended questions to assess “core outcomes espoused by all of higher education—critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem solving, and writing” (Klein & Shavelson, 2007, p. 21). Their sobering findings suggest 45 percent of students made minimal to no gains in critical thinking and overall learning during their first two years of college and 35 percent did not make any or significant gains after the full four years (Arum & Roksa, 2011). This suggests higher education has growth opportunities to not only include the number of graduates, but also the quality of graduates.

The second dimension in the quality shortfall lies with employers, whose expectations of college graduates have risen to unprecedented levels. According to a Hart Research Associates online survey of 318 employers who require over 25 percent of their new hires to have an associate’s or bachelor’s degree and a minimum of 25 employees, “employers indicate that they prioritize critical thinking, communication, and complex problem-solving skills over a job candidate’s major field of study when making hiring decisions” (Hart Research Associates, 2013, p. 24). Employers minimize their search costs by using college degrees as a screening mechanism because they expect college-educated applicants to have higher analytical and technical skills than applicants without degrees (A. Carnevale & Rose, 2011). Furthermore, Carnevale, Smith, and Strohl (2010) project the number of jobs requiring a postsecondary degree by 2018 will increase from 59 percent in 2010 to 63 percent in 2018. Carnevale and Rose (2011) analyzed wage and employment data to show the United States has been under-educating its citizenry, which will have large consequences on its economy and income inequality. They found the wage differences between employees with high school diplomas versus bachelor's degrees were largely "attributed to workers with a Bachelor's degree landing more often in managerial and professional jobs; being more likely to work in higher paying middle-skill jobs; and being more likely to earn more within narrow job titles" (A. Carnevale & Rose, 2011, p. 30). In sum, the U.S. is lagging in the quality of critical skills demanded by employers, the number of college-educated employees entering the workforce, and further stratifying incomes by educational attainment.

Disruptive Innovation

In 2006, the Spelling's Commission clearly captured their assessment of the future for higher education and how it is ripe for disruption:

> What we have learned over the last year makes clear that American higher education has become what, in the business world, would be called a mature enterprise: increasingly risk- averse, at times self-satisfied, and unduly expensive. It is an enterprise that has yet to address the fundamental issues of how academic programs and institutions must be transformed to serve the changing educational needs of a knowledge economy. It has yet to successfully confront the impact of globalization, rapidly evolving technologies, an increasingly diverse and aging population, and an evolving marketplace characterized by new needs and new paradigms. In tomorrow's world a nation's wealth will derive from its capacity to educate, attract, and retain citizens who are to able to work smarter and learn faster —making educational achievement ever more important both for individuals and for society writ large. (2006, p. xii).

This research study will use the theoretical background described here and coined by Christensen as disruptive innovation. Christensen (1997, 2015) explains that in every market there are two trajectories: one in which the pace of technologies improves faster than the needs of the consumer and the other at a slower pace for customers to utilize the new functions. Sustaining innovations are those that sustain the leading companies' trajectory, such as advancements in airplanes to fly higher, televisions to project clearer, or smart phones with more applications. The goal in sustainable innovations is consistent advancement to make better products with higher profit margins for the continued consumers. Christensen & Horn (2008) explain that, on occasion, disruptive innovation is seen where it is not a breakthrough improvement:

> Instead of sustaining the leading companies' place in the original market, it disrupts that trajectory by offering a product or service that actually is not as good as what companies are already selling….Instead, the disruptive innovation extends its benefits to people who, for one reason or another, are unable to consume the original product, so called non-consumers. Disruptive innovation tends to be simpler and more affordable than existing products… And at some point, disruptive innovations become good enough to handle more complicated problems and take over, and the once-leading companies with old-line products go out of business. (p. 14).

Christensen's theory is further explained with business examples in *The Innovator's Solution* including IBM, AT&T, Sony, Microsoft, and Apple (C. M. Christensen & Raynor, 2003). The common theme between all of these technology giants is they were all at one point underdogs who used simpler products to appeal to an underserved market and gradually grew their market share. They competed against non-consumption to build the brand. Schumpeter (1942) coined the term "creative destruction" which is similar to Christensen's theory in that in refers to the continuous process of innovation where a product or process improves to replace the outdated one.

Moreover, the theory of disruptive innovation can be applied to higher education to address the growing concern of student success and the college completion agenda.

Wildavsky (2013) proposes the use of online courses and Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCs, to address the rather time-consuming process of developing and delivering courses. Technology-driven institutions like the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) are utilizing distance learning technology to offer cost-effective solutions to nontraditional students, many of them members of the U.S. Armed Forces, who would otherwise not have the opportunity to attend brick and mortar programs. Undergraduate students are also able to enroll in larger class sections and expanded offerings to continue matriculating at a steady pace, which will contribute to graduation and retention rates (Wildavsky, 2013). As students are able to complete their undergraduate degrees in sequence as they are advised, their understanding of material and strategic thinking should increase (Venit et al., 2013). Furthermore, once the infrastructure is in place, the cost associated with delivering online courses is less expensive, which drives productivity and reduces the cost to the university. In turn, the reduced cost to the university should translate to affordability and accessibility to the student, thus building human capital (Conner & Rabovsky, 2011).

While many agree that the traditional model of higher education is in jeopardy, the solutions seem to be widespread without offering implementable solutions (Arum & Roksa, 2011). Student outcomes and their link to investments are hot button issues across the United States, and technology seems to be a consistent pacifier. Christensen, Aaron, and Clark (2005) propose that it is not simply enough to have technology in the classroom, however; It must be implemented in such a way to solidify results with processes: “More resources are not the cure for flawed processes” (p. 546). For example, classrooms across the country in both P-12 and higher education have been equipped with technology, but if the instructor does not feel prepared to use them effectively, they become expensive word processors and search engine tools.

Instead, the Christensen, Aaron, and Clark (2005) propose the primary driver of education reform is the change in processes, but it is often the most difficult move. People become reluctant to process change because it is uncomfortable, and if they believe they were able to previously solve a problem with a process, they believe it will work again. Christensen, Aaron, and Clark (2005) instead assert, “success in the past does not guarantee success in the future—especially when circumstances change and success requires something new (p. 547). Two reasons are proposed as to why it is difficult for organizations to change. First, the processes in place will continue to have some success, so there is reluctance to change from the original design. Second, people cling to what they have known and created as a self-preservation mechanism.

In order to address the concerns above, Christensen, Horn, and Johnson (2009) address how education can be reformed by “disrupting class” or looking at the problems from a business lens utilizing the disruptive innovation theory. The authors assert the root problem with education reform is the lack of students’ intrinsic motivation. Students are more likely to stay on task if the work is stimulating, fun, and enjoyable. In order to do so, schools must make the work more intrinsically motivating by matching the ways the individual students learn best, which results in customized learning. The theory of disruptive innovation can be applied to move the schools from a monolithic school structure to a student-centric environment. The researchers (2009) propose the disruptive innovation theory can be applied in a two-step process of creating opportunities for computer-based learning and implementing customized learning for each student.

Following suit to the theory, computer-based learning must be more than simply putting computers in classrooms. Instead, they must implement to the “non-consumers,” or those they describe as the “alternative to taking a class from the computer is nothing at all” (C. Christensen et al., 2011, p. 12). Second, user-developed online tutoring tools must be developed to match the individual student’s needs with consideration of content and pace. Student would maintain core competencies, but it would be better matched to their interests, needs, and pace. They would not need to wait for testing as a unit; rather, they would assess how far a student moved through the material (Carmody, 2009).

Considering the application of theory as discussed, undergraduate students are not adequately consuming what once was the academically rigorous bachelor’s degree. Instead, they are practicing “the art of college management” in which they are successful not by hard work but by “controlling college by shaping schedules, taming professors, and limiting workload” (Nathan, 2005, p. 113). Academic leaders have an opportunity to implement disruptive innovation by offering student-centered online courses to the non-consumer.

Christensen and Eyring (2011) provide a context for the three key issues in higher education including accessibility, affordability, and accountability. The authors present three fundamental questions about the status of higher education and the applicability of their theory of disruptive innovation. First, the authors apply what they refer to as the “DNA,” which represents the university’s genetic make-up in regards to teaching philosophies, courses, research, and departmental structure, and whether they are able to survive in the status quo. Next, they ask what the new university models and the possibility of their applicability is to service the crisis. Last, they apply disruptive innovation to question of how universities should expand performance measures beyond quantitative outcomes to include qualitative measures, such as student employability and societal meaningfulness.

Application of the theory of disruptive innovation is introduced for strategic planning and implementation. To address the concern of accessibility, Christensen and Erying (2011) propose that online learning will allow students' persistence to graduation to be less disruptive with expanded course offerings as well as flexibility to life's demands. More important to the theory is the opportunity for higher education to what would have been considered the non-consumer. LeBlanc (2013) further explains that online education provides accessibility to what he calls the have-nots: "Online education serves a disproportionate percentage of poor Americans because those students have few other choices, illustrating another aspect of disruption theory" (p. 167).

Furthermore, affordability is addressed by "unbundling" the college experience. Christensen and Eyring (2011) propose decreasing the cost of institutional resources, especially facilities and instruction, by offering online learning programs. Staton (2013) applies the theory with recommendations to "unbundle" the college experience and strip what could be seen as "fluff" for the experience of higher education. He provides a hierarchy of services based on irreplaceability and how likely the institution could embrace it.

Lastly, disruptive innovation provides an opportunity to strategically plan outcomes and assessments to the respective stakeholders. The students are able to choose what they learn and the pace in which they complete their degrees. Christensen and Erying (2011) propose modularized curriculum to allow the student to finish the degree with a minimum number of credit hours. Academic advising and personal tutoring is essential to this strategy and can be implemented in the innovative university. Year-round operations are possible using disruptive technologies without the added costs of facilities and personnel management. Many question the quality of student outcomes, and the authors propose limiting online class size and paying instructors a fair market rate to ensure quality (C. M. Christensen & Eyring, 2011).

Christensen (1997) has made significant contributions to the future of higher education in his theory of disruptive innovation. As institutions of higher education face the realities of a changing environment, it becomes even more imperative for adaptation to resist peril. Enrollment continues to increase at both the undergraduate and graduate levels; therefore, leaders in higher education will be subjected to these changes at the risk of bankruptcy (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Bedard & Herman, 2008). Policymakers, practitioners, and the public are seeking innovative solutions to address the concerns of accessibility, affordability, and accountability. The adoption of disruptive innovation could address these concerns not only at the individual educational career levels, but also the persistence between the two.

Summary

This review of literature shows progress and a need for progression in higher education access, accountability, and affordability. The number of degree-granting institutions in the United States has grown by 12% in the past decade while post-secondary enrollment has grown by 35% (Kena et al., 2014; National Center for Education Statistics, 2015a). Mumper and Freeman’s (2011) meta-narratives on tuition inflation were reviewed citing varied reasons, but the bottom line is the public perceive higher education as a good investment. Accountability is the rising issue among the three with greater emphasis placed on accreditation and efficiency which connects to the fourth section of this review of literation, the College Completion Agenda. Policy makers and higher education leaders are striving for global competitiveness as the United States has slipped from second to eleventh in post-secondary attainment (Board, 2011). Disruptive innovation, the theoretical framework of this study, is reviewed to provide a possible remedy to degree attainment.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Using case study methodology, the purpose of the study was to apply the theory of disruptive innovation to gain insight into the policies, procedures, beliefs, and perspectives of how a single college that was established in the twenty-first century adopted and enacted policies necessary to maintain an institution with consistent retention and competitive graduation rates.

The inquiry examined institutional behaviors at a rapidly growing 4-year baccalaureate institution established in the twenty-first century by reviewing policies, procedures, programs, perceptions, and resources for adherence to the Complete College Agenda. The Complete College Agenda, produced by the U.S. Department of Education, outlines strategies for Governors and higher education leaders to increase completion rates to again become the number one nation with the highest percentage of degree-holders for adults 25-34 years old (Education, 2011). Furthermore, the study explored college administrators' and faculty's experiences regarding the developmental process of the institutional mission, vision, and operating principles focused on student success as measured by retention and completion rates. The results provide college and university administrators and policymakers with information for shaping the culture of an institution around the increased regulatory environment of accountability in higher education. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of the establishment of a higher education institution in the twenty-first century adhering to the Complete College Agenda should provide leaders transferable practices to both new and existing institutions that instill a culture of accountability and student success where both students and faculty are engaged in the educational process.

Rationale

According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research yields a descriptively rich investigation where meaning is attributed to the individual's experience. The intent was to study the individuals' lived experiences, not the researcher's perceptions of the individuals' experiences. Furthermore, Creswell (2013, pp. 45–47) provides a definition of qualitative research with a focus on the research design. He asserts there are eight characteristics inherent to qualitative research: (1) natural setting; (2) researcher as key instrument; (3) multiple methods; and (4) complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic (5) participants' meanings; (6) emergent design; (7) reflexivity; and (8) holistic account. In this study, the researcher explored the complex issue of accountability in higher education through a single-case study of an institution established in the twenty-first century which has grown exponentially while maintaining above average retention rates. There has been a need for a complex, detailed understanding of the issue with the intention of extracting salient themes for higher educational leaders and policymakers to inform decision-making and strategy for innovation and student success.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following two research questions:

1. In what ways have greater accountability measures of retention and completion rates influenced the mission, vision, and operating principles of a higher education institution established in the twenty-first century?
2. How do faculty, leaders, and staff from an institution that demonstrates disruptive innovation perceive accountability measures that positively relate to student retention and completion rates?

Research Design

Single-case study methodology was used in order to “understand the contexts or settings in which participants in the study address a problem or issue” (Creswell, 2013, p. 48). Single-case design is appropriate under several circumstances including critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal (Yin, 2014). This study’s circumstances were *critical* in regards to representing a necessary test of the theory of disruptive innovation and *unusual* in that the single-case was a traditional institution established in the twenty-first century.

The researcher sought to understand how and why an institution that was established in the twenty-first century has experienced success in retention and student engagement as measured by IPEDS retention data and the NSSE data. The case study design was intended to provide others with information about what to do or not to do, provide an explanation for differences of opinions, as well as give insight on successes and challenges in a situation (Yin, 2014). Information gathered from the case studies may have a direct influence on policy, practice, and future research (Merriam, 2009).

The researcher explored the principal themes of faculty and student engagement within the context of this unique institution and how those interactions contributed to student success in retention and graduation rates. The four elements of the research process—epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods—were built on decisions throughout the research process and how these decisions are justified (Crotty, 1998). The researcher identified and analyzed the salient themes in this case study that have contributed to student success in retention and graduation rates. Through a social constructivism epistemological lens, where cultural sphere and group alliances shape how people perceive relationships, themselves, and the other, is where "meaning is constructed, not discovered" (Crotty, 1998, p. 5). Furthermore, social constructionists "emphasize the idea that society is actively and creatively produced by human beings" (Marcus, 1994, p. 484). The theory guiding this study was Christensen's theory of disruptive innovation, which "describes a process by which a product or service takes root initially in simple application at the bottom of the market and then relentlessly moves up market, eventually displacing established competitors" (C. M. Christensen, 2015, p. 1). The sustaining innovations are "disrupted" because they often advance faster than what the consumer's needs are (C. M. Christensen, 1997, 2015).

Using this worldview, the researcher utilized multiple methods including semi-structured in-person interviews with senior administrative leaders and faculty in the institution, document review of institutional policies, programs, and practices as well as NSSE findings. Focus groups were conducted with faculty to answer the question related to cultural perceptions of institutional behaviors connection to student success. The theoretical perspective "provides a context for the process and grounds its logic and criteria" (Crotty, 1998, p. 7).

Sample

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the name of the institution and where it is located has remained anonymous. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants involved in the study. A purposeful sampling approach where there is a conscious decision as to whom is selected for study was used to identify the site for the study as well as the senior administrative participants to be interviewed individually and a random sampling of faculty (Creswell, 2013). The single case in this study was selected based on the following criterion: the institution had to be established in the twenty-first century; the retention and/or graduation rates needed to be higher than the national average; the mission of the institution had to incorporate an element of innovation and accountability for student success. The researcher selected this institution, located in a southeastern state, because it fit all three criterion and sought to be a model for innovation in higher education. In fulfilling its mission, this institution has grown to over 10,000 students in its first decade, with open-access admissions selectivity. More importantly, however, the institution had higher than average first to second year retention rates compared to the overall national average of 64.9 and open-access institutions of 56.6 (ACT, 2016).

Participants

The researcher conducted in-person, semi-structured interviews with eight senior leaders within the institution including three academic deans, the Provost, Chief of Staff, Dean of Students, an Associate Provost, and an Executive Director. Additionally, an instructor was interviewed in lieu of a cancelled focus group. Additionally, five faculty members were contacted via email and encouraged to participate by their deans in a focus group. Administrators and faculty members were selected based on a key informant's recommendations to provide a diverse perspective. Leaders who have experienced the evolution of the institution were preferred, and the representative departments in which the leaders and faculty serve provided a holistic view of student success strategies.

Subjectivity Statement

According to Creswell (2013), one of the defining characteristics of qualitative research is that the researcher is the key instrument in data collection: "The qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants" (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). As a mid-level higher education leader in enrollment management, the researcher negotiated the ethical dilemmas of quantity and quality of enrollment while seeking the best for the student. The researcher's bias was to seek innovative solutions to provide access, affordability, and accountability within higher education. The researcher did not have a relationship to the institution nor significant prior knowledge and therefore attempted to have an unbiased, neutral interpretation of the findings. Furthermore, the use of multiple data sources added to the trustworthiness of the data and also aided in justifying the emerging themes by adding strength from different sources (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). All sources centered on the same set of research questions (Yin, 2014).

Validation

Creswell (2013) asserts, "it is not enough to gain perspectives and terms; ultimately these ideas are translated into practice as strategies or techniques" (p. 250). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the researcher to "employ accepted strategies to document ‘accuracy’ of their studies” (Creswell, 2013, p. 250). Validity tests whether the research study actually tested what was intended to be studied and reliability measures the stability of responses in the data analysis (Glesne, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The qualitative data collected in this study was validated using the four criteria identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility seeks to establish the truth in findings. The researcher ensured credibility by triangulating the data with in-person, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and document review. The data collected in the interviews and focus groups were member-checked by the participants to ensure accuracy in interpretation from the transcriptions and to remove any biases the researcher may possess (Glesne, 2006). The data was peer-reviewed for consistency (Creswell, 2013). Transferability in qualitative research is not typically generalizable to a large population, rather the intent for the researcher is to provide rich, thick descriptions to allow readers to apply the findings to a similar situation (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 2009). A study is deemed dependable when it is repeated in the same context with the same participants and the similar findings are reported (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure dependability and offer future researchers a step-by-step process of replication, the researcher utilized an audit trial of the field notes, a research journal, and thematic analysis of codes (Glesne, 2006). Lastly, conformability is the degree to which the researcher is able to reduce their biases and the findings are based on the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher provided a subjectivity statement in order to address any potential biases and conflicts with the data (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, transcriptions, codes, and themes were checked by an external reviewer and the faculty research methodologist in order to ensure the researcher's biases and to have multiple people ensuring conformability (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lastly, the method and analysis were audited for validity and reliability by an external auditor: the dissertation committee (Creswell, 2015; Glesne, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Collection

Data was collected in three phases. First, eight semi-structured interviews with senior administrative leaders and one faculty were conducted. The researcher purposefully sampled the participants to be interviewed including the Provosts, Chief of Staff, Dean of Students, three academic deans, and other institutional leaders. Based on the key informants recommendations and introductions, the researcher contacted the interviewees via phone and email to ask for participation. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Next, purposeful sampling was used to identify five faculty members to participate in a focus group. The focus group was recorded and transcribed. Lastly, the documents reviewed included the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) findings, institutional policies and procedures, programs, and practices, institution's website, and campus resources.

Interviews

The researcher conducted nine semi-structured, interviews with senior administrative leaders and a faculty member who were charged with decision making at the institution. Johnson (2006) found that 12 interviews produced over 90 percent of meta-themes. The semi-structured interviews included predetermined, open-ended questions regarding the overall topics. The largest portion of the time was spent exploring themes that come to light during the conversation (Merriam, 2009). The researcher was an active-listener throughout the interview to connect with the interviewee and ask questions regarding experiences, feelings, and knowledge (Patton, 2002). During the interview, the researcher recorded basic field notes and audio-recorded the interview for transcription.

Focus Group

The second method of data collection included a focus group where a group of five faculty were "informally interviewed in a group discussion setting" (Neuman, 2011, p. 459). The researcher served as the moderator to discuss the perceptions of the institutional behaviors and whether contributed to student success at the institution that was established in the twenty-first century. According to Wibeck, Dahlgren, and Oberg "focus groups enable researchers to study and understand a particular topic from the group participants themselves" (2007, pp. 250–251). Communication, language, and thought dynamics were observed to socially construct the meaning of student success at the institution (Wibeck et al., 2007). The moderator provided clear instructions and was non-directive in order to facilitate a 76 minute open discussion amongst the faculty participants (Bischoping & Dykema, 1999; Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). Similar to interviews, the researcher took basic field notes and audio-recorded the discussion for transcription.

Document Analysis

The third method for data collection in this study was document analysis. The documents included institutional policies, programs, and practices, the institution's website, campus resources, as well findings of the NSSE data. These documents included websites, university brochures, campus publications, and employee handbooks. Document review in qualitative research provides descriptive and historical information relevant to the research questions that may not be found in interviews or focus groups (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Neuman, 2011). Documents also allow the researcher to track change and development as well as verify findings in other methods or sources (Bowen, 2009). Particularly salient documents to review included the institution's mission, vision, operating principles, and history and employee guidebooks.

Institutional Review Board Approval

Approval from Mercer University's Institutional Review Board and the institution to be studied was obtained prior to any data collection. Informed consent was provided via email to all participants as well as in person for the interviews and focus groups. Participants were informed of how the study sought to advance the knowledge of the twenty-first century higher education institution and the implications of increased government regulations for accountability. Confidentiality was maintained by assigning pseudonyms to the participants and the institution. The researcher sought approval from the institution by meeting with an academic dean and adhering to all requirements outlined by the Institutional Review Board at the institution.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data was organized using the NVivo qualitative analysis software package produced by QSR International. In a case study, "data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence, to produce empirically based findings" (Yin, 2014, p. 132). The general strategy of the researcher was to rely on the theoretical proposition of Christensen's theory of disruptive innovation (Yin, 2014). The stratified, semi-structured interview and focus group transcriptions with participants from the administrators and faculty were analyzed for significance and meaning using ethnographic content analysis (Grbich, 2013).

Next, an iterative approach to analyzing the interview transcripts and document analysis produced relational codes. The researcher used thematic analysis to construct meaning by grouping, regrouping, and linking data (Grbich, 2013). A summary of the steps included: reviewing the database; recalling research questions, theoretical framework, methodology, and review of literature; coding key segments and writing descriptive comments to the side; grouping like segments; attaching overarching labels; conceptualizing groupings and linking them to literature and theory (Grbich, 2013, p. 61). The researcher directly interpreted the single instance—in this case the twenty-first century higher education institution—to draw meaning by interpreting themes in the textual documents after exploration of the word frequency and the connection to the transcriptions (Creswell, 2013). The researcher continued with a linear, step-by-step procedure to analyze the data both iteratively and reflexively until recurrent themes emerge (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

Reporting Results

In an effort to ensure trustworthiness, the data was triangulated from the in-person interviews, focus group, and document analysis. The researcher provided rich, thick descriptions of the emergent themes with direct quotes from the participants and visual representations, tables and charts, of the themes. The structure of the findings was composed using a linear-analytical structure where the explanatory case covered the issue being explored, the methods, findings, and conclusions (Yin, 2014). Pseudonyms were utilized to reference all participants and the institution in order to ensure anonymity.

Summary

This chapter provides the methodological framework for the case study. The chapter presents the research questions that guided the study, the specific research design, epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods that were utilized to investigate how increased governmental regulations for accountability have influenced the establishment of an institution in the twenty-first century, specifically the mission, vision, and operating principles. The researcher also explored how the institution's mission to integrate innovative technology and adaptive learning communities contributed to student success as well as the perceptions of the university's commitment to student success. The results of the study can be utilized by leaders in higher education charged with institutional change, student success, and accountability. Policymakers and the general public may find the study useful in understanding the future of higher education and how disruptive innovation may change the long-standing enterprise. The data analysis is discussed in Chapter 4 and the conclusions and implications have been reported in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to apply the theory of disruptive innovation to gain insights into the policies, procedures, beliefs, and perspectives of how a single college that was established in the twenty-first century adopted and enacted policies necessary to maintain an institution with consistent retention and graduation rates. The research problem addressed in this study is the widening imbalance between admission and graduation rates occurring at many long-standing institutions of higher education. This problem is particularly evident in the state of Georgia where the Governor's Office seeks to address the projected need of 60 percent of in-state jobs requiring post-secondary education by 2020, while the current rate is 42 percent ("The Governor's Office of Student Achievement," 2017).

The researcher conducted a qualitative case study of a less-selective institution that was established in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Additionally, according to the selected site's website, it has higher than national averages in retention and graduation rates for less-selective institutions. The qualitative study examined institutional behaviors in developing a culture of innovative approaches to student success by extracting salient themes and yielding rich, thick descriptions. The researcher's general strategy was to rely on the theoretical proposition of Christensen's theory of disruptive innovation while analyzing the significance and constructing meaning by grouping, regrouping, and linking data (Grbich, 2013). The qualitative research methods included both deductive and inductive thematic analysis of the interviews and focus groups transcriptions by first performing line-by-line coding. The researcher then performed enumerative content analysis and ethnographic content analysis on relevant documents (Grbich, 2013). In order to maintain anonymity of all participants, documents, and the study site, the researcher assigned pseudonyms. The pseudonym for the study site is Innovative College. Descriptions of the site and participants are provided in the following sections as well as the findings from interviews, focus groups, and document reviews.

The two research questions designed to guide this study are as follows:

1. In what ways have greater accountability measures of retention and completion rates influenced the mission, vision, and operating principles of a higher education institution established in the twenty-first century?
2. How do faculty, leaders, and staff from an institution that demonstrates disruptive innovation perceive accountability measures that positively relate to student retention and completion rates?

Research Site Description

The site chosen for the study was a large, public college/university in the southeastern region of the United States that was established in the twenty-first century. According to their website, Innovative College was founded at the turn of the century after leaders within the community identified the need for the largest county east of the Mississippi River to have a four-year college. Innovative College now educates over

10,000 undergraduate students in an effort to meet workforce needs of the community. Other criteria used to select this institution included the mission's contextual illustration of the theory of disruptive innovation where, according to their website, they seek to use innovative technology and active-learning environments to enrich the educational experience at the lowest cost for public schools in the state. Their website and marketing materials state that they seek to be a model for innovative approaches to higher education in the twenty-first century by engaging and mentoring to develop the whole student. Additionally, the institution has higher than average retention and graduate rates for less-selective institutions according to the National Center for Education Statistics' report "The Condition of Education" (Kena et al., 2015).

According to their website, Innovative College's approach to higher education in the twenty-first century is built on "innovative practices, a caring culture, affordability, and access." The three critical elements, as described by Innovative College, include "attention," "affordability," and "access." The attentive model is described as being demonstrated by small class sizes, faculty mentors, individual attention, and a strong commitment to tutoring and academic success. According to the University System's website (2017), Innovative College's tuition and fees are one of the most affordable within the University System. Furthermore, the College has the second lowest graduate debt among Southern regional colleges, both public and private, according to the *U.S. News & World Report* magazine in 2017. Innovative College enrolls about 70 percent of its students from the county in which it is located and the other 30 percent is from 37 U.S. states and 100 countries, according to the College's website. Ranked as the most ethnically diverse Southern regional college, public or private, Innovative College serves a minority-majority student population and communicates in their marketing materials that they are committed to serving first generation students.

The college offers 15 bachelor's degree programs and more than 40 concentrations. According to Innovative College's most recent National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), its students score it among the nation's top colleges in several areas of student engagement. Innovative College began with less than 200 students and now enrolls over 10,000 students. More than 400 faculty members are employed for instruction and mentoring, and most hold terminal degrees in their fields of study. Faculty are appointed into non-tenure track positions, and they are eligible for renewable appointments of three or five year durations or one-year non-renewable appointments. The campus now stretches over 200 acres and has expanded from a single building to a campus that includes high-tech classrooms, a library, residence halls, and student life spaces. According to their website, The University System has cited Innovative College as the most effective in the System for space utilization due to their variety of class times offered.

Participant Description

After IRB approval from Mercer University and Innovative College, the researcher compiled a list of key administrators to contact for interview. A key informant provided feedback and the best contact information available, and the researcher contacted each administrator individually via email and phone. Email invitations to participate in the study were sent to eleven (11) key administrators, and eight (8) agreed to be interviewed in-person. Additionally, one (1) faculty member agreed to participate in an in-person interview when a focus group meeting time was cancelled due to lack of participation. One other focus group consisting of five (5) faculty members was done. The key administrators were selected based on their experience and leadership position within the college. Several identified themselves as "charter," meaning they were employed at Innovative College from the beginning. Interviews were conducted over the course of two full days on-site in the participants' offices. Each interview was scheduled for 30 minutes and ranged from 17 minutes to 50 minutes, with the shortest being the Chief of Staff and the longest, an academic dean. Table 2 displays the pseudonyms and descriptions of interview participants.

Table 2

Administrator and Faculty Participants

Name	Title	Gender	Years at Institution
Dr. Goodwin	Associate Provost	Female	Charter
Dr. Matthews	Academic Dean	Male	Charter
Dr. Marian	Academic Dean	Female	Charter
Dr. Jones	Academic Dean	Male	~10 years
Mr. Nash	Chief of Staff	Male	~ 1 year
Mr. Joseph	Dean of Students	Male	~10 years
Dr. Andrews	Provost	Male	~1 year
Dr. Laborde	Executive Director	Female	Charter
Ms. Moreland	Instructor	Female	~ 5 years

In addition to the nine interviews, a faculty focus group was conducted in-person at Innovative College. During the administrator interviews, the researcher asked academic deans to encourage participation, and two deans sent emails to their faculty to solicit participation. Five faculty members participated in a focus group, which lasted one hour and nineteen minutes. Faculty varied in their discipline and years of service, and all five had terminal degrees in their fields. Because of the infancy of the institution, all five faculty members taught elsewhere before coming to Innovative College. Table 3 describes the faculty participants with pseudonyms, academic discipline, descriptions, and years of service.

Table 3

Faculty Focus Group Participants

Name	Discipline	Gender	Years of Service
Dr. Thomas	Chemistry	Female	~10 years
Dr. Johnston	Mathematics	Male	~10 years
Dr. Baker	Biology	Male	Charter
Dr. Armstrong	Mathematics	Female	~10 years
Dr. Langton	Information Technology	Male	~10 years

Findings

The qualitative data collection process included nine (9) semi-structured interviews, one (1) focus group, and document analysis. Each interview participant was asked ten (10) open-ended questions with follow-up questions for further clarification. The interview questions can be found in Appendix C. The five (5) faculty focus group participants were asked eleven (11) questions, and they can be found in Appendix D. The researcher guided the fluid conversation among the faculty members to address all eleven questions, though some responses were lengthier and addressed more than one question. After the nine interviews and focus group were conducted in-person, the researcher listened to each recording, and read and re-read each transcription before beginning with initial coding. Agar (1980) suggested that researchers, “read the transcripts in their entirety several times. Immerse yourself in the details, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking in into parts" (p. 103).

Memoing was also used throughout the data collection process to capture ideas, reflections, and initial ideas for codes; this method also served as an audit trail. Additionally, the memos linked concepts to the literature in an iterative approach, and the researcher used memos to guide the initial inductive thematic analysis. A peer review process was conducted with a colleague who is knowledgeable of qualitative research and the NVivo software to verify coding. Lastly, the faculty methodologist served as an external reviewer of the data analysis process.

Creswell (2013) describes the next step in the spiral as "describing, classifying, and interpreting the data. In this loop, forming codes or categories represents the heart of the qualitative data analysis" (p. 184). The researcher conducted a process of line-by-line coding to form 44 initial codes from the interview and focus group transcriptions by "aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being using in a study, and then assigning a label to the code" (p. 184). Some codes were descriptive codes while others were "in vivo" codes, or "names that are exact words used by participants" (Creswell, 2013, p. 185). The 44 initial codes were then condensed to 10 categories based on related topics, and a second cycle of coding then winnowed further to four inductive themes as a result of data saturation (Saldaña, 2015). The four inductive and deductive themes that emerged were *Accessibility, Innovation, Attentiveness*, and *Student Success*. Two themes emerged for each of the two research questions. The initial codes, categories, and themes in Table 4 show the connection to the two research questions; they are ordered alphabetically.

Table 4

Initial Codes, Categories, and Themes by Research Question

RQ1: In what ways have greater accountability-measures of retention and completion rates influenced the mission, vision, and operating principles of a higher education institution established in the twenty-first century?

Initial Codes	**Categories**	**Themes**
Access	Accessibility	Accessibility
Affordability	Culture	
County		
Community		
Culture		
EAP Program		
First Generation		
Hispanic Students		
Non-Native Language		
Physical Campus		
Registration		
Building from Scratch	Innovation	Innovation
Cell Phone	Strategic Planning	
Challenges	Technology	
Failure is Not an Option		
Innovation		
Leadership		
Mission		
Priorities		
Risk		
Strategic Planning		
Technology		

RQ2: How do faculty, leaders, and staff from an institution that demonstrates disruptive innovation perceive accountability measures that positively relate to student retention and completion rates?

Initial Codes	**Categories**	**Themes**
Attentive	Attentive	Attentiveness
Charter	Faculty	
Connection	Identity	
Engagement		
Faculty		
Introductions		
Mentoring		
Military Ties		
Service		
Support		
Tenure		

Table 4 Continued

Academics Accountability Learning Pedagogy Outcomes Retention Student Affairs Student Story	Active Learning Student Success	Student Success

Theme 1: Accessibility

The first research question focused on the influence of greater accountability measures in developing Innovative College's mission, vision, and operating principals. One of the most salient themes that emerged in connection with the influence was the *Accessibility* of Innovative College. Every participant in the administrator interviews as well as the four faculty in the focus group mentioned the access mission. Eight of those twelve participants cited it, in particular, as one of the primary reasons they were each attracted to the institution. They stated that their students come from varying backgrounds, both demographically and in academic preparation. The two categories that contributed to the *Accessibility* theme to answer the first research question were "Accessibility," and "Culture." The initial codes that contextualized these categories and eventually the theme were, "Access," "Affordability," "County," "Community," "Culture," "EAP Program," "First Generation," "Hispanic Students," "Non-native," "Language," "Physical Campus," and "Registration."

Mr. Johnson, Dean of Students, stated, "I love our access mission. I love that we're able to provide an opportunity, an education for students regardless of where they're coming in. I think we have the best opportunity to really transform a student."

Dr. Marian, an academic dean, elaborated on the access mission, stating that students are admissible with a 2.0 GPA or GED, but they have to work hard while they are enrolled. She continued: “This is a second chance, the place where phoenixes grow. It doesn’t matter what you did, it’s what you’re about to do now. You can get in, but you can’t get out.” Dr. Marian noted that, while the admissions standards were open, the College would make “substantial efforts” to retain each student.

Not only are the “doors wide open,” as two interview participants described, Innovative College, has been recognized for serving a diverse population of students, including first generation, non-traditional, and minority students. English as a second language students are also served through the English for Academic Purposes, or EAP, program. Dr. Jones, an academic dean, explained that students who score below a 480 on the verbal section of the SAT, under a 21 on the ACT, or do not have any college-level English credits to transfer are required to take a the Accuplacer placement exam to determine where they will begin their courses and whether they need to take a few EAP courses.

A goal of the institution, as stated by Dr. Marian, is to become a Hispanic Serving Institution, or HSI. The Hispanic population makes up approximately 18 percent of the student body, and the Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS) is a prominent part of the culture. Dr. Marian elaborated on the organization and its contributions to the institution:

> [OLAS] was one of our very first organizations, and is now one of our largest organizations as well. They told the President back in the fall that within a year or two, they anticipate that they will hold a majority of the offices in student government.

In addition to providing access to a diversity of students, one of the College's primary goals in terms of *Accessibility* is to provide a low-cost education without the sacrifice to high standards. This issue of "affordability" was mentioned in four interviews. Administrators commented about the commitment to maintain the attentive teaching model while keeping the cost as low as possible. When asked a follow-up question about how student success is defined by the institution, Dr. Laborde, Executive Director, stated, "We have a commitment to affordability. Our average student debt at graduation is relatively low, which we're proud of. But I wouldn't necessarily say we have written a target." Dr. Marian, an Academic Dean, describes how affordability is important to the access mission:

> The majority of our students are working. A good portion of our students that are working, are contributing money back into the home, and they are an 18, 22 year old person doing that. We're not looking at a student model where mom and daddy, they've got it and they don't need any help. We're looking at a model where those kids are contributing back. We know that's a reason that part of our kids stop out.

Another category and corresponding code that contributed to the *Accessibility* theme and addressed the first research question was "Culture." The researcher condensed "Community," "County," "Culture," and "Physical Campus" into this category and consistently heard a commitment to serving the county in which Innovative College is located. In fact, approximately 70 percent of student enrolled are from the home county. For the purpose of this study, the pseudonym "Growing County" has been issued to the College's location. Mr. Nash, Chief of Staff, shared how Innovative College seeks to be accessible to serving the county:

> We are here to serve the citizens of [Growing County], and the population of [Growing County], and [the Southeast], so we can't fail at that. And it's constantly looking at what we're doing in our recruiting and bringing people - now we're

> spreading out to other counties, but we can't fail this population. That's our duty, and that's what we need to be.

Furthermore, faculty participants in the focus group discussed how the academic programs were developed to serve the needs of the community by providing access to higher education to its residents and graduates for local employers. Dr. Thomas, a chemistry professor, explained that surveys were conducted in Growing County to determine the top industries that graduates were needed. Dr. Marian, an academic dean, elaborated:

> We had a couple years to really carefully build what we wanted our programs to look like. Just being able to be so intentional and responsive to community needs. We have information technology because that's a huge employment sector in [Growing County]. We're adding a major, in film and media, because that's such a big industry now in Georgia. Very much tied to the community, and I think that's certainly true for education prep because we don't place with anyone but [Growing County]. That's the only place for an opportunity. Not even [the city], which is in [Growing County]. We are totally tied to the school district. Nursing has lots of different placements for their nursing students, but again, it's all about the community and serving the needs of the community. Building a better workforce for the community.

The economic impact Innovative College has had on the community has also included infrastructure and job growth, as the campus has grown from one building that, prior to Innovative College, housed five different schools, with increased growth in facilities. The physical campus serves students who may not otherwise have access to technology and educational resources. In addition to high-tech classrooms, students have access to the library, a health center, eateries, student life facilities all within a safe environment. Mr. Johnson, Dean of Students, added at the end of his interview when asked whether there was anything additional the researcher should know, that Innovative College has “made the most of their resources.” Mr. Johnson stated:

> Resources has always been a problem, a challenge. But I think we've been able to do the best that we can with what we have. One example is, classroom usage or building usage. I know that the system has come out with their reports about percentage of classroom usage and I know that our classroom usage easily doubled the next closest system institution, as far as utilizing what we have to the fullest, classes from very early morning to late at night.

Theme 2: Innovation

Christensen's theory of disruptive innovation emerged as a deductive theme within this study and contributed to addressing the first research question about greater accountability measures influencing the mission, vision, and operating principals of an institution of higher education established in the twenty-first century. The three categories that emerged to form the *Innovation* theme included, "Innovation," Strategic Planning," and "Technology." Initial codes that contributed to these categories included, "Building from Scratch," "Cell Phone," "Challenges," "Failure is Not an Option," "Innovation," "Leadership," "Mission," "Priorities," "Risk," "Strategic Planning," and "Technology."

When asked what was attractive to administrators and faculty about Innovative College, seven administrators and four faculty added to the "access" mission by describing the opportunity to "build a college from scratch." Dr. Matthews, an academic dean, answered:

> If you spend any time in higher education or learning about higher education, the opportunity to build a college from scratch doesn't really come along very often. To be a part of that was also a very exciting thing because my interests ... I'm a builder, that's what I like to do. I like to critically think problems and build new structures. I'm kind of an innovator at heart. This really just allowed me to do the things that I really enjoy.

Dr. Goodwin, Associate Provost, described her interview process in length to show how *innovation* and an entrepreneurial spirit were attractive to her and the search committee. She described that the nature of the interview questions were about work ethic, commitment, and the ability to produce results. Dr. Goodwin stated:

> My husband and I both have always been described by others as having entrepreneurial spirit and I think the people who had to be first in their roles here when so much was to be done with it being brand new, have to be entrepreneurs. They have to be willing to learn, they have to be willing to work very non-standard hours or long hours. They have to be willing to not look at a job description and think you're really going to be doing just that.

Within 10 months, Dr. Goodwin led deans and faculty to get eight programs designed and approved by the Board, followed by two academic honor societies two years later. Faculty echoed the sentiment of the ability to build something new, including academic programs, in the focus group. Dr. Langton, an informational technology professor, stated, “We literally defined the IT program. We built up all the program goals and course objectives from scratch. It was fill-in-the-blanks, since year one.” Dr. Johnston, a mathematics professor, concurred: “We were given carte blanche in developing in our programs.” The focus group faculty and administrators described having the flexibility to design academic programs and implement new ideas because traditions had not yet been established.

According to Dr. Matthews, an academic dean, innovation requires risk, both on the part of students, faculty, and administrators, alike. One code that emerged in both the interviews and focus groups was “Failure is not an option.” Dr. Laborde, Executive Director, described students as pioneers, and Dr. Marian, an academic dean, stated, “It’s a big deal to me that I don’t let students fail, so I guess that’s part of my mission here too.” The faculty focus group participants described taking risks by coming to Innovative College and the recession budget constraints. As described by administrators and faculty, both students and faculty and staff were empowered not to fail. Despite those risks, Innovative College grew and delivered higher education in a new form.

Dr. Baker, a professor of biology, stated, “The university system wanted a brand new college instead of a flagship campus or something like that, where innovation would be part of the mainstream, and try anything and everything differently. That was very exciting, and still is.” Innovation came in the form of developing new programs, serving any and every population of students, and strategically planning for the use of educational technology such as online tutoring platforms and educational applications that students can access from their cell phones. While most colleges and universities have technology in the classroom and support the use of it, Innovative College, equips every classroom with Smart technology and encourages faculty to find new ways of presenting material. Dr. Baker continued the conversation by saying, “I’m always looking for new ways to present material, and the first line of thought for me is what’s the new thing, the new piece of technology, and I’ve found there’s all kinds of different ways to get the message across.”

Technology extends beyond the classroom at Innovative College. According to Dr. Matthews, an academic dean, every faculty member is “issued a cell phone in lieu of office hours,” and their number is given to every student at the start of the semester. Dr. Matthews continued to explain that faculty include a technology agreement in their syllabi where they tell students their preferred forms of communication and their commitment to return calls, emails, and text messages. The cell phone initiative starts at the very top of the organization with the President giving his cell phone number to every student at Orientation. Mr. Nash, Chief of Staff, described this phenomenon from an administrative perspective:

> The President gives his cell phone numbers to every student. I mean that right there is pretty unique. Which means that all the rest of us provide our cell phone numbers because we'd rather they call us and let us solve the problem. So we're incentivized, not because anybody gets yelled at or anything like that, but we're incentivized to help the students. And we say, we don't ask the faculty or the staff to do anything that isn't done throughout our institution.

The Chief of Staff and two deans shared that the challenges Innovative College faces is maintaining the momentum and innovation while scaling the model and creating what they cited as the "2.0 version." According to Mr. Nash, this will mean "continuing the attentive teaching model" with small class sizes, maintaining an affordable education with limited resources, and growing enrollment while sustaining the retention and graduation rates. Dr. Marian, an academic dean, said, "If we lose the attentive teaching model, if somebody has to create a new college in the twenty-second century, we failed." She continued to state that both the charter and current President shared this sentiment, and she finished by stating, "We have to be vigilant that we don't fall into the status quo." As described by the focus group faculty, the culture of Innovative College is also at risk as new faculty and administrators join the institution. Dr. Armstrong, professor of mathematics, explained the shift in faculty as the College has grown and where they are currently:

> I think right now is sort of a tug of war almost, in that there is one group of people that are trying to uphold what Innovative was, and what it built, and what it meant in those first few years, and there is the other school of thought that believes that we should be more and look more like a traditional institution looks. So right now, as we're growing, I think it's been hard to maintain just that core message of who we are. The good news is that it hasn't pulled us apart.

Although the faculty members who participated in the focus group had been employed at Innovative College in the earlier years, they spoke positively of the environment and commitment to serving students. Dr. Andrews, who has been at the institution less than a year and serves as Provost, demonstrated the cohesiveness and commitment of faculty and staff by sharing that nearly seventy percent of employees give financially to the institution.

Theme 3: Attentiveness

The second research question's purpose was to determine how faculty, staff, and leaders at an institution that demonstrates disruptive innovation perceive accountability measures that positively relate to student retention and completion rates. The focal point in this question and what the two themes demonstrated was how the community perceives these measures. The first theme that emerged was *Attentiveness*. The three categories that emerged to form this theme were "Attentive," "Faculty," and "Identity." The initial codes that formulated the categories were "Attentive," "Charter," "Connection," "Engagement," "Faculty," "Introductions," "Mentoring," "Military Ties," "Service," "Support," and "Tenure."

The researcher began each administrator interview and the focus group by asking the participants to tell about their roles at the institution. Within the introductions, the researcher quickly distinguished that "charter" was a salient point for faculty and administrators, alike. The researcher unknowingly selected three charter administrators and two "inaugural" members, meaning they were "founders" or joined the college the following year. During the conversations, the participants indicated that they knew who was "charter" and who was not. For example, in the focus group Dr. Baker, a biology professor, introduced himself by sharing his name, role, and that he had “been here since the beginning.” Quickly following his statement, Dr. Thomas, a professor of chemistry, said, “He’s charter.” She continued to say, “He has a little desk weight that says that, too.” Dr. Baker downplayed the statement by saying, “And that’s all we have. We have a little marble thing that says, ‘Charter Faculty.’” Dr. Thomas responded with, “That’s worth its weight in gold.”

Because other participants had mentioned “charter” in their interviews, as well, the researcher followed up with questions in the focus group to learn more about the term’s meaning, learning that the “charter” members were not only the ones who designed the academic programs, but they were also the ones who established the culture for faculty moving forward. Dr. Thomas, a chemistry professor, who is not a charter faculty member, explained, “The first group of people who were hired cared. And that's what established the morale and the view of most of Innovative College. I think that's how we're different. We had founding members who were brought from all over the country, and their main goal was to do what's best for students.” Dr. Goodwin, Associate Provost, who was charged with helping faculty design the academic programs, responded that hiring decisions were one of the main priorities that led to success creating an attentive culture that is focused on student success:

> I think that the deans seemed to have done a great job of hiring anywhere from 60, 80, 105 full time faculty a year, which is a lot for an institution in a year. And hiring faculty that were philosophically attuned to really helping first generation students succeed. I think that hiring good faculty is one reason we've succeeded so well. It's why the retention rates are so good. The deans have done a great job of selecting the right search committee chairs, making sure that the questions that were asked of the applicants were appropriate for finding faculty who can do the work that's needed to be done here to help students succeed.

According to conversations in the faculty focus group, the faculty were motivated to prioritize teaching and engagement. Four out of five faculty members mentioned the ability to focus on teaching was most important to them. Dr. Johnston, a professor of mathematics, stated, "The primary focus is how good of a teacher are you." He continued to share his view on teaching and engagement:

> That's why I'm here, because I believe I'm going to be valued for my teaching, and I believe I'm going to be valued for trying different things. I believe I'm going to be valued in interacting with students, engaging with students, whether it's in the cafeteria, or when I mentor them, or whether it's after class when I notice something and I said 'I know that this is happening, and can I make some recommendations, can I make some suggestions? Can you see me in my office?' I knew that I would be valued for these things. It's who we are.

Faculty and administrators alike value the attentive teaching model, so much so that when Innovative College was established, they made a conscious decision not to have a tenure system. Dr. Matthews, a charter academic dean, explained that the decision not to have tenure was not based on the criticism that once faculty gets tenure they do not have to work as hard. Rather, he stated, "I think for us, we believed that we could build a system that included the good parts of what tenure supported and avoid the pitfalls of tenure." Dr. Matthews continued to share what he saw as the pitfalls of tenure that they wanted to avoid, which included a system of "have and have-nots," where tenured faculty had more rights than non-tenured or non-tenured track faculty. The charter administrators and faculty wanted every faculty member at Innovative College to have the same rights and opportunities. The second pitfall of tenure, Dr. Matthews explained, was that "tenure tends to have a clock that doesn't necessarily work for everybody." He elaborated that tenure typically has to be earned within six years; if a faculty member is not able to make it, he or she is dismissed. Dr. Matthews stated:

> [The tenure clock], in our estimation, causes faculty to do things that they don't necessarily want to do, but everything in those first six years is about doing the things that they know is going to increase their chances to get this prize, which might not be best for their students. They might have to not focus on teaching as much so they can focus on their research because they know that that's going to be the decision. It causes them to not to pursue things that might have a risky outcome.

Two faculty members specifically shared that they left tenured positions at other institutions to come to Innovative College. Furthermore, six out of how many faculty members the researcher interacted with through the focus group and interviews were in support of not having a tenure system; they maintained that it allowed them the freedom to assign weight to their annual evaluation for teaching, engagement, service, and research. When the researcher asked how they discuss not having a tenure system with faculty applicants and Dr. Matthews affirmed that he had not encountered a situation where an applicant cited not having a tenure system was the reason they did not choose to come to Innovative College if offered a position. He said they have had applicants decline their offers, but no one had specifically stated it was because of the lack of tenure. The focus group faculty echoed Dr. Matthews's view that not having a tenure system allowed them to try new things and serve their students. Dr. Johnston, a professor of mathematics, stated:

> We're encouraged to think outside the box, and the support. You have some thoughts? Go ahead and implement them. They don't work? Well, you know, try something else. And I think that makes working at Innovative College different. Part of that has to do with a non-tenure system. When you say "go try something", usually professors say "I'll try, I have nothing to be afraid of." Here, everybody is protected. Everybody has the same protection, because of the non-tenure system. So instructors try things, full professors try things, associate professors try things, they all have the same protection. They don't feel threatened by failure.

At Innovative College, the *attentiveness* extends beyond the classroom to student engagement and mentoring. Each faculty member is assigned approximately 25-35 mentees who they not only advise of their course selections, but also help guide them in career and life situations. Faculty members and administrators spoke about meeting students in their offices, the cafeterias, library, and in other common spaces on campus. While interviewing Ms. Moreland, Instructor of Education, she paused a few times because she was expecting students to text her who were meeting in her office after the interview to be mentored. Although she apologized for being distracted, she said, “This is important to me.” Ms. Moreland discussed how she keeps in touch with her students beyond the classroom and even graduation by setting up a Facebook group. She periodically checks in with them through the semesters, and even stops in to check on them after graduation when she is making rounds to observe student teachers. Dr. Baker, Professor of Biology, discussed how he requires his students to meet with him in-person to talk about more than their potential holds or registration plans. He explained that, at first, some students are resistant, but they quickly adapt. Dr. Baker stated, “They start to learn to understand and appreciate that we’re here for their success, to help them in any way we can, and I think that weighs heavy into the graduation and retention successes we have so far.” Dr. Thomas, Professor of Chemistry, summarized attentiveness and the conceptual framework for which faculty perceive Innovative College supporting their roles as instructors:

> The four pillars of Innovative College help make you a better teacher. If you're doing scholarship, you're getting out there and knowing what the new stuff is. If you do service, you're there in the trenches with the kids. If you're doing student engagement, you're understanding their viewpoints. If you're doing creative thinking, you're not becoming stagnant.

The four pillars are displayed on banners on one of the academic buildings on campus, and were described by focus group faculty members as the core values for all employees and students. The four pillars are leadership, scholarship, creativity, and service.

Theme 4: Student Success

The fourth theme, *Student Success*, has been interwoven in much of the analysis thus far and stands as one of the most salient themes that contribute to how faculty and campus leaders perceive accountability measures that positively related to student retention and completion rates at Innovative College. The two categories that emerged to formulate this theme were “Active Learning,” and “Student Success.” Initial codes that contributed to the categories were “Academics,” “Accountability,” “Learning,” “Pedagogy,” “Outcomes,” “Retention,” “Student Affairs,” and “Study Story.” Throughout the interviews and focus groups, the researcher heard five stories about successful students, and each of them echoed the same sentiment: that Innovative College changed them from being first generation, minority, or less academically qualified to becoming graduates and successes in their career paths. Dr. Marian, an academic dean, explained that for each student, success meant something different. She stated, “Student success is a student’s ability to reach his or her goals, which means different things for different students.” For example, Dr. Matthews, an academic dean, stated that seventy-five percent of first-year students stated they came to Innovative College with the intention of transferring to another institution, but approximately seventy-five percent of those who say they plan to transfer continue their studies and graduate from Innovative College. Students who enroll who are under-prepared from high school are supported through mentoring, supplemental instruction, and tutoring.

Tutoring is a hallmark of student success at Innovative College, where the School of Transitional Studies supports a program called "TIC, TAC, TOE." Dr. Jones, an Academic Dean, explained the tutoring program meant "tutoring in the classroom [TIC], tutoring around campus [TAC], and tutoring online and everywhere [TOE]." Dr. Jones elaborated that faculty and student peers supplement instruction by having tutors in the classrooms and laboratories. Additionally there are "Tutors across campus" which means "pop-up" tutoring at small tables within the academic buildings, library, and student facilities. The college also subscribes to online tutoring resources that make the resource free and accessible to all students anytime, anywhere. Dr. Marian, an academic dean, stated, "we try to impress upon our students that if you're not understanding something in class, if you're worried about something, you've got ways to reach out to the faculty, to somebody, to get questions answered. I think that's a big contributor to student success." Mr. Nash, Chief of Staff, explained how he measures student success by stating, "We measure success by retention, progression and graduation of course; we need to look at what we are doing to improve retention with the academic standards being absolutely empowered." The focus group faculty made it clear that, while retention, progression, and graduation were important to them, they did not sacrifice academic quality. Dr. Baker, Professor of Biology, said, "we don't dumb it down to retain the students that really struggle with it. It's challenging, and that's one of the reason I'm so proud of the retention rates we do have, because it's a challenge to retain students that cover such a wide range." Mr. Johnson, Dean of Students, described how the Innovative College was a transformative experience:

> Obviously we want all of our students to graduate, but I think it's also important to know that they're developing while they're in the process of learning, up until

> the point that they're graduating, so they can actually get the most out of their college experience. So it's not a, necessarily a race to the finish line to get your degree, but it's also about the process, you know cause that's critical for us to make sure our students have that transformational experience here.

The focus group faculty also discussed how students from the state flagship university would take summer courses at Innovative College because they wanted the small classroom environment and the ability to connect with faculty, especially in "demanding science courses." They also shared that some students started at Innovative College with the intention of transferring to the state flagship or other more selective colleges, but when they were immersed in the attentive environment. They elected to persist and graduate from Innovative College. Dr. Matthews, an academic dean, explained, "We kind of flip what students intended to do on its head."

According to the administrators and faculty, it is equally important that students not only persist and graduate, but also enter a career within their field of study prepared. Dr. Jones, an Academic Dean, explained it succinctly, "one of our key priorities is to produce graduates and not just students who attend college." Dr. Baker, Professor of Biology, explained the need for access institutions to be successful where graduates do not just "get through" four years and pass their classes. According to Dr. Baker, Innovative College is preparing their graduates to be competitive in their careers. He described their graduates as:

> Somebody that's going to be competitive in the market, whatever market; IT, math, biology, whatever. And our approach to our education, that innovative philosophy, and student-centered nature of it, I think it's a real advantage to our students, and we do graduate some sharp folks.

Dr. Johnston, Professor of Mathematics, shared how much he and other faculty members believe in the academic preparation of Innovative College by stating, "a good measure of buy-in is to ask the faculty if their kids go to Innovative College. You'll find that a lot of Innovative College's faculty's kids go here." Dr. Langton, Professor of Information Technology, chimed in to support the statement, "their kids come here, and they like it."

Document Review

The researcher reviewed nine documents for content analysis to triangulate the data and themes identified in the focus groups and interviews. Yin (2012) endorses triangulation of data by stating, "any case study finding or conclusion is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information following a similar convergence" (p. 120). The documents in this study were chosen because they detail the history, mission, vision, operating principals, and how greater accountability measures influenced the inception of the culture of Innovative College. One document, the "About Us" webpage, describes their "innovative model," and it is written for the prospective student or external stakeholder. The headline read, "Welcome to the future of education. Your education."

The documents reviewed in this analysis were: (1) "Retention and Graduation Rates of FTFT Freshman," (2) "Faculty and Staff 2014-2015," (3) "General Information 2014-2015," (4) "Advancement 2014-2015," (5) "Core Values," (6) "2013 NSSE Results," (7) "About Us" webpage, (8) "Recognition" webpage, and (9) "History" webpage. Table 5 describes the ten documents examined for content analysis.

Table 5

List of Documents Reviewed

Document Reviewed	Document Description
Retention and Graduation Rates of FTFT Freshman	IPEDS data of retention and graduation rates for first-time, full-time freshman
Faculty and Staff 2014-2015	Describes corps of instruction and faculty definitions
General Information 2014-2015	Describes the history, mission, vision, and goals of the college
Advancement 2014-2015	Describes public affairs and development initiatives
Core Values	Describes core values, four pillars, and commitment to innovation and recognition
2013 NSSE Results	Comprehensive results of National Survey for Student Engagement
About Us webpage	Describes history, location, innovative model, mission, vision, and operating principals
Recognition webpage	Collection of national awards and recognition
History webpage	Describes history and summary of today

Content analysis was conducted on the selected documents by using word frequency in NVivo software to derive key words that aligned with the thematic analysis and initial codes of the interviews and focus groups. The researcher examined the 100 most frequently used words within the nine documents and narrowed the review to those with a 0.2 weighted percentage for a total weighted percentage of 26.42. Of the 65 words reviewed from the narrowed list, the researcher omitted 32 words because they were not relevant to the research, including pronouns, years, or words that would make the institution identifiable. Nineteen words were close matches to the initial codes from the interviews and focus groups, further confirming their relevance to the inductive themes. For example, instruction was a close match to the pedagogy, and faculty were a close match to professors. Thirteen additional codes were identified in this iterative process, and the researcher linked them to the four emergent themes. Table 6 lists the thirteen additional codes and their corresponding theme in the order of weighted percentage.

Table 6

Content Analysis of Thirteen Additional Codes and Corresponding Themes of Documents

Code	Theme
Students	Accessibility
Class	Attentiveness
NSSE	Student Success
Education	Student Success
Staff	Attentiveness
Develop	Innovation
Programs	Student Success
Change	Innovation
Diversity	Accessibility
Open	Accessibility
Athletics	Student Success
Graduate	Student Success
Environment	Attentiveness

Each of the codes resulting from content analysis are descriptors of the key components of Innovative College. Based on the analysis of documents, the researcher identified “students” as one of the most salient codes in the document review. Although the word was used in every interview and focus group transcript and over 100 times in four of the interviews, the theme emerged from the documents. Most specifically, “students” was used in eight out of the nine documents, and four documents where written as if they were to the student or for the student. The five other documents were written reports about the students and college outcomes. One of the documents, “Core Values,” specifically headlines, “We Made College All about You!” They introduce the college by stating the following:

> Innovative College is a dynamic college where the focus is on YOU—the student. Small classes, student support and a high-tech campus make success possible for everyone. Innovative College will help you get a college degree that lays the groundwork for your career.

In addition to the "Core Values" document, the eight others detail the history, mission, vision, and operating principals of Innovative College. They specifically communicate their commitment to an accessible, affordable, and attentive model for higher education that values innovation and technology. They measure student success by higher than average retention and graduation rates as well as favorable student engagement survey data.

When analyzing the individual codes and their relationship to the four themes, the code "Students" was one of three initial codes that contributed to the *Accessibility* theme. "Diversity" and "Open" were also codes that were identified for this theme. "Diversity" was used in six of the documents, and it was used most frequently when describing the student population. The College's accolades included rankings and a diversity of perspectives in the documents. "Open" was used in four of the documents, and most often referred to the inception of the institution and the commitment to "open access". In the "About Us" webpage, it describes the three elements of its approach to higher education with one of them stating, "Access: Innovative College opens the door to four-year degrees for more people, including those who might have never considered college." The theme, *Innovation,* was supported by two additional codes from the documents: "Development" and "Change." "Development" was used in four of the documents in the context of the "development of the whole person" or "holistic development of students" in the "About Us" webpage, or in reference to "degrees that meet economic development needs" in the "General Info" webpage. "Change" was used in six of the documents, and was most salient in the "History" webpage to describe the college:

> [It's] innovative practices, caring culture and extremely affordable tuition are changing the game in higher education, and changing the future for students at all levels, of all ages and from all walks of life. It's groundbreaking, four-year college model changes how educators facilitate and support student learning and is characterized by its integrated approach to attention, affordability and access.

The third theme, *Attentiveness,* was supported by three additional codes: "Class," "Staff," and "Environment." Small "class" sizes was most frequently used to describe the attentive teaching model at Innovative College, and it was used in six documents. Again in the "About Us" webpage, the critical elements affirmed the attentive teaching model and the "staff" code was identified when it stated, "Attention: Innovative College's committed faculty and staff provide students with the support and tools they need to be successful in college and in life." The mission statement in the "General Info" webpage included the code "Environment" when it stated the College "emphasizes the innovative use of technology and active-learning environments to provide students enhanced learning experiences," and it continues to say it is, "outstanding faculty and staff actively engage students in various learning environments, serve as mentors and advisors, and assist students through programs designed to enhance their academic, social, and personal development."

The fourth theme, *Student Success,* had five additional codes identified from the documents including "NSSE," "Education," "Programs," "Athletics," and "Graduate." The "NSSE" or National Survey for Student Engagement, reported student perceptions of several elements of student success such as academic challenge, learning with peers, experiences with faculty, and campus environment. "Education" was used in six of the documents and discussed the experience and Innovative College's "approaches to education" such as their description in the "About Us" webpage which said they will be the "driving force for change in student success." "Programs" was used in six documents to describe the academic and extra-curricular programs that contributed to student success, and "Athletics" was used in four documents to describe the attributes of their student success model. Lastly, "Graduate" was used in five documents and with one of the most descriptive in the "General Info" webpage where it stated, "Not only has the institution grown dramatically in the first 10 years, it has achieved impressive student retention rates, outstanding ratings in key student engagement measurements, and is on track to achieve high graduation rates." Additionally, the mission statement's final line referred to student success when describing their graduates being "inspired to contribute to the local, state, national, and international communities."

Summary

The researcher conducted a qualitative case study to gain insights into the policies, procedures, beliefs, and perspectives of how a single college that was established in the twenty-first century adopted and enacted policies necessary to maintain an institution with consistent retention and graduation rates. The study site was selected based on the higher than national averages of retention and graduation rates for a non-selective institution and based on its mission to use innovative technology and active-learning environments to enrich the educational experience at the lowest cost for public schools in the state. The college seeks to be a model for innovative approaches to higher education in the twenty-first century by engaging and mentoring to develop the whole student. The researcher conducted nine (9) in-person interviews with administrators and a faculty member and a focus group of five (5) faculty. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants, the study site, and documents to maintain anonymity of the participants and the institution. The pseudonym for the study site is Innovative College. The description of the site and participants are provided in the introduction of this chapter.

The interviews and focus groups were transcribed and analyzed by line-by-line coding to extract the four salient themes: *Accessibility*, *Innovation*, *Attentiveness*, and *Student Success*. The researcher used the memo technique to capture ideas based on the interviews and focus group, and it guided the reporting of the findings. Thick, rich descriptions were used to describe the participants, research site, and to report the data collected from the interviews, focus group, and document analysis. The findings of the in-person interviews, focus groups, and document reviews are reported in this chapter in the form of quotes and summaries. Triangulation of the data was accomplished through the gathering of data from multiple methods, and the codes and themes aligned with the two research questions and Christensen's (1997) theory of disruptive innovation.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Chapter five highlights the application of the theory of disruptive innovative to gain insights into the policies, procedures, beliefs, and perspectives of how a single college that was established in the twenty-first century adopted and enacted policies necessary to maintain an institution with consistent retention and competitive graduation rates. This study was a single-site case study of a less-selective institution that was established in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The researcher conducted eight in-person, semi-structured interviews with administrators and one faculty member and a focus group with five faculty members. The researcher also reviewed nine documents. The results from the interview transcripts, focus groups, and documentation triangulation were used to address the major findings, implications, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

Higher education is facing substantial reform since its inception approximately 150 years, where access was once restricted to the elite, to the current period, a movement of access for all (Altbach, 2010). Since the turn of the century, researchers have been scrutinizing the sustainability of education, with particular attention to the accessibility, affordability, and quality of education, or accountability (Selingo, 2003; Venit et al., 2013). Furthermore, there has been a paradigm shift in the past two decades across institutions of higher education toward accountability and student success measures linked to retention and graduate rates (J. Immerwahr et al., 2008; N. Johnson, 2013). Between 2001 and 2011, the number of degree-granting institutions of higher education and the enrollment within those institutions has increased to 12 percent and 32 percent, respectively. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015a). Despite this growth in access, the United States has slipped from second in developed countries for young adults (ages 25-34) holding a bachelor's degree to eleventh (Board, 2011). The Commission on Access, Admissions, and Success in Higher Education was developed in conjunction with the College Board to combat the change in global competitiveness and regain the United States' position as a leader in degree attainment by 2025 (Board, 2008). According to the United States' Census Bureau's most recent report (Ryan & Bauman, 2016), 36.1 percent of adults age 25-34 in the United States have at least a bachelor's degree in 2015 compared to 29 percent in 2010 (Kena et al., 2015). While increases are being made in bachelor's degree attainment in the United States, institutions of higher education are being scrutinized for their outcomes, and a shift from an inputs-based system to an outcomes-based system is apparent.

This study was designed to examine how an institution established in the twenty-first century implemented innovative practices in the mission, vision, and operating principles to adhere to the new accountability measures in higher education with a focus on retention and graduation rates despite having less-selective admissions criteria. The purpose of the study was to apply the theory of disruptive innovation to gain insight into the policies, procedures, beliefs, and perspectives of how a single college that was established in the twenty-first century adopted and enacted policies necessary to maintain an institution with consistent retention and competitive graduation rates. Few studies have explored an institution that was established with these characteristics; rather, long-standing institutions are seeking to adapt to the new accountability measures. The findings from this study contribute to the knowledge gap in this area.

The two research questions for this study were designed to explore the influences of greater accountability measures of retention and graduation on the mission, vision, and operating principles as well as the perceptions of faculty, staff, and administrators on the accountability measures that positively relate to student success. The researcher carefully reviewed all transcripts of the interviews and focus group for thematic analysis as well as reviewed documents for content analysis. Four themes emerged from the analysis: *Accessibility, Innovation, Attentiveness,* and *Student Success.*

Discussion of the Major Findings

This study resulted in four major findings:

1. In order to increase degree attainment, higher education leaders can implement strategies to increase access and affordability to all students.
2. There are innovative practices and policies that have the potential to increase retention and graduation rates for established colleges and universities.
3. Attentiveness and student engagement are effective factors to incorporate in the evaluation of faculty, staff, and administrators.
4. Student success measures, such as retention and graduation rates, are relevant to adapt policies, pedagogy, and student services.

A review of literature supports the individual and societal benefits of access to higher education. Baum, Ma, and Payea (2013) found the more one advances his/her education, the better quality of life he/she will live, including higher earning potential, higher life expectancies, fewer demands on social services, and a better-skilled and more adaptable workforce. The latter is especially important during economic recessions such as the one in the first decade of the twenty-first century (A. P. Carnevale et al., 2010). Often in higher education literature, access and affordability are discussed in tandem. St. John (2013) posits that both the expansion of institutions of higher education to provide more geographic access as well as the federal financial support of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and its subsequent revisions resulted in an expansion of higher education enrollment. Middle class families had the ability to apply for state and federal grant aid as well as low-interest loans.

A decade ago, The Spelling's Commission captured its assessment of the future of higher education and how it is "ripe for disruption" by comparing it to the business world in which it would be classified as a "mature enterprise: increasingly risk-adverse, at times self-satisfied, and unduly expensive" (2006, p. xii). The Commission continues to assert that higher education is an "enterprise that has yet to address the fundamental issues of how academic programs and institutions must be transformed to serve the changing educational needs of a knowledge economy" (Education, 2006, p. xii). Christensen's (C. Christensen et al., 2011; C. M. Christensen, 1997, 2015) theory of disruptive innovation expounds upon the Commission's assessment and applies the theory to higher education. He explains that sustaining innovations, or sustaining institutions in the case of higher education, are those that sustain the leading institutions trajectory with incremental advancements and higher profit margins (C. M. Christensen & Eyring, 2011). Disruptive innovations, or disruptive institutions or programs in higher education, may not start off as successfully as sustaining institutions. They extend their benefits to who was once the non-consumer. They are simpler and more affordable, and at a certain tipping point, they progress enough to take over the once-leading institutions (C. M. Christensen & Horn, 2008). This single case study exemplifies the theory of disruptive innovation, as Innovative College started out not as large or full of the same amenities as other long-standing institutions. Through the first decade, however, it grew in enrollment, accolades, and student success. According to Dr. Baker, a professor of biology, the state and University System supported the inception of the College, but it was designed to be an entirely separate institution with innovative practices and not associated with the state flagship. He described it being a risk, but the institution has succeeded thus far, according to the interviewed administrators, faculty, and supporting documents.

A review of literature shows an attentive teaching and learning model has been linked to greater retention, persistence, and graduation rates among all types of students (Astin, 1984; Bean, 1982; Ernest T. Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Tinto, 1975, 1982, 1993). When students build relationships amongst themselves, the faculty, staff, and administration of an institution, they are more likely to persist and reach their educational goals, and it is especially important they build those connections within the first year of enrollment (Ernest T. Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983) An example that was found in the data was the use of cell phones in lieu of office hours for faster, and more accessible mentoring and advising. Additionally, Innovative College has displayed their commitment to student success by implementing a comprehensive tutoring program called TIC, TAC, TOE, which stands for Tutors in the Classroom, Tutors around Campus, and Tutors Online and Everywhere. Furthermore, when the campus community is committed and evaluated based on student engagement, they are more accountable for the outcomes (Weerts & Ronca, 2006). One of the most salient findings in this study was the decision not to have a tenure system for faculty. Rather, faculty are offered renewable one to three year appointments. Focus group faculty members described the lack of tenure in a positive way by saying they were given the discretion to assign weight to teaching, engagement, service, and scholarship to their annual evaluations, and it allowed them the confidence to try new things to teach their students. Dr. Matthews, a charter academic dean, affirmed it was a conscious decision from the start to create an environment amongst faculty members where they had academic freedom and long-term employment, but to avoid the "pitfalls" of tenure. Dr. Matthews explained they saw the "pitfalls of tenure" as not having a system of the "have and have-nots" between those who had tenure and those who didn't. Also, the "tenure clock" doesn't work for everyone, and by not having it faculty are encouraged try new things with a focus on pedagogy and student engagement; they do not have to focus solely on what they expect will help them "win the prize." Policies, practices, and services should be consistently assessed to reach optimal student success outcomes, and the use of cell phones, tutoring, and the lack of tenure are a few examples of how Innovative College is committed to student success.

The data for this study was collected over a six-week period where the researcher met in-person with key administrators and faculty to apply the theory of disruptive innovation at an institution of higher education established in the twenty-first century.

The researcher conducted interviews, a focus group, and analyzed documents for this qualitative case study. The interviews and focus groups were coded and themes were extracted that aligned with the theory of disruptive innovation and the literature on student success.

The researcher extracted four themes from the interview and focus group transcripts that aligned with disruptive innovation and student success, including: *Accessibility, Innovation, Attentiveness,* and *Student Success*. The focus of the study was what influenced the inception of the institution and its mission, vision, and operating principles and how student success measures were perceived by the campus community. All of the interview and focus group participants reinforced the four themes. The researcher then conducted an enumerative content analysis of the documents to compare the codes, add additional codes, and link them to the themes. There were similar codes between all three sources of data that triangulated the thematic analysis of the interview and focus group transcripts.

The findings of this study support the importance of innovative and greater accountability measures in higher education, as the United States seeks to have a more educated citizenry. Also important from this study are the cultural perceptions of the internal stakeholders when establishing an institution of higher education that is built on an outputs-based model rather than an inputs-based model.

Conclusions

This study addressed a higher education issue for new and long-standing institutions seeking to adhere to new accountability measures and to increase attention on outcomes rather than enrollment. According to Horn and Mackey (2011, p. i), “focusing on inputs has the effect of locking a system into a set way of doing things and inhibiting innovation; focusing on outcomes, on the other hand, encourages continuous improvement against a set of overall goals and, in this case, can unlock a path toward the creation of a high-quality student-centric education system." This study sought to address the problem of increased enrollment with relatively stagnant growth in six-year graduation rates by studying a less-selective institution that was established in the twenty-first century. Innovative College has seen substantial growth in enrollment in its first decade, from approximately 200 students to over 10,000 students, while at the same time maintaining higher than national average retention and graduation rates. The goal was to provide information on how greater accountability measures influenced their mission, vision, and operating principles as well as how the internal stakeholders perceived them.

The results of this study found the establishment of Innovative College was to provide access to higher education for a large, diverse, and growing county in the Southeast. The intention was also to provide a high-quality education at the lowest cost possible while using the latest educational technology, and preparing students for a twenty-first century workforce. Throughout the interviews and focus groups, it was apparent that the inaugural President and leadership were instrumental in the development of an attentive culture, and ultimately, they were the catalysts of the institution's success in terms of retention and graduation rates. Dr. Baker, a Charter faculty member, recalled his first day at Innovative College when the President said, "Welcome to this wonderful experiment," and several participants echoed the sentiment of taking a risk by joining a new institution. As described earlier in this chapter, the state and University System made a conscious decision to build a brand new institution rather than a branch campus of the state flagship. According to Dr. Baker, they encouraged innovation and knew it was a risk.

Equally important to the risk the charter members took in joining Innovative College is the excitement of "building something from scratch." The findings suggested that the charter faculty and leadership were innovators, committed to developing a new college while asking what was best for the student in every decision. Furthermore, the findings suggest the hiring process of faculty itself was one of the most important decisions as well as the decision not to have a tenure system. Focus group faculty members reported they felt safe to try new things, implement the use of technology, and mentor students beyond class schedule advising. Additionally, office hours are not a requirement of faculty, instead they are issued a cell phone and are committed to serving their students through multiple channels of communication. Ultimately, the institution is committed to student success as demonstrated by their quantifiable results of retention, persistence, and graduation rates as well as the support services, student engagement, and student success stories they shared.

Implications

Outcomes-based measures, including performance-based funding and stricter accreditation standards, are a new reality for higher education entities. Policymakers and the public are demanding a greater return on investment, and high education institutions are bringing more attention to retention, persistence, and graduation rates. For long standing institutions, this is a paradigm shift from inputs to outputs, or enrollment to graduation. This involves developing greater attention and accountability for student support and engagement beyond the first year of enrollment and allocating resources to student success. Horn and Kelly (2015) have suggested unbundling the components of post-secondary education to make it more attainable and affordable, but the literature suggests higher education will continue to see changes to its current form.

The findings of this study will be beneficial to higher education leadership in both sustaining and innovative institutions and in developing or shifting their cultures toward greater accountability measures. Leaders should consider the establishment or revision of mission, vision, and operating principals toward student engagement, an attentive teaching culture, and the development of the whole student. Furthermore, the use of educational technology, not merely equipping classrooms with technology, will be instrumental in the success of preparing graduates for the twenty-first century workforce. Higher education leaders should be especially selective when hiring faculty and staff who are committed to the current or aspirant culture of student success. Lastly, the development of tutoring programs and mentorships should be available for every student, not only those who express a need for those services.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. The first recommendation for further study would be to conduct a longitudinal study of Innovative College to determine if and how the retention and graduation rates were maintained with the growth in enrollment and evolution of the College.
2. The second recommendation for further study would focus on extending this study by examining the influence and perceptions of students to assess how they attribute their own success to accessibility, innovation, and attentiveness.

3. The third recommendation for further study is to explore how changes in leadership, faculty, and staff influence the sustainability of Innovative College's core values.
4. The final recommendation for further study would be to examine a long-standing institution of higher education who has implemented innovative technologies and shifted a culture towards greater accountability measures and student success in order to compare and apply these strategies.

Final Thoughts

The purpose of this study was to examine how an institution established in the twenty-first century implemented innovative practices in the mission, vision, and operating principles to adhere to the new accountability measures in higher education with a focus on retention and graduation rates despite having less-selective admissions criteria. The researcher sought to find strategies and tactics in building or maintaining a culture of student success that can be implemented to a new or sustaining institution of higher education. The analysis of data from this study concluded that a commitment to access, affordability, innovation, and attentiveness led to student success for this institution, and the practices could be applied to other higher education entities. Leaders should seek innovative practices, allocate resources, and stand firm in their commitments to student success. This study shows that a culture of innovation and attentiveness can lead a diverse group of students to higher retention and graduation rates, and ultimately help them achieve their educational goals.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

MERCER
UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board
For Research Involving Human Subjects

Thursday, November 10, 2016

Ms. Kelly Lynn Holloway
AACC Building 580
Other
3001 Mercer University Dr.
Atlanta, GA 30341

RE: Disruptive Innovation For Student Success At A Twenty-First Century 4-Year Baccalaureate Institution (H1611312)

Dear Ms. Holloway:

On behalf of Mercer University's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, your application submitted on 10-Nov-2016 for the above referenced protocol was reviewed in accordance with Federal Regulations 21 CFR 56.110(b) and 45 CFR 46.110(b) (for expedited review) and was approved under category(ies) 6, 7 per 63 FR 60364.

Your application was approved for one year of study on 10-Nov-2016. The protocol expires on 09-Nov-2017. If the study continues beyond one year, it must be re-evaluated by the IRB Committee.

Item(s) Approved:
A case-study using in-person or phone interviews, focus groups and audio recordings.

NOTE: Please report to the committee when the protocol is initiated. Report to the Committee immediately any changes in the protocol or conesnt form and ALL accidents, injuries, and serious or unexpected adverse events that occur to your subjects as a result of this study.

We at the IRB and the Office of Research Compliance are dedicated to providing the best service to our research community. As one of our investigators, we value your feedback and ask that you please take a moment to complete our Satisfaction Survey and help us to improve the quality of our service.

It has been a pleasure working with you and we wish you much success with your project! If you need any further assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

Respectfully,

Ava Chambliss-Richardson

Ava Chambliss-Richardson, M.Ed., CIP, CIM.
Associate Director of Human Research Protection Programs (HRPP)
Member
Institutional Review Board

"Mercer University has adopted and agrees to conduct its clinical research studies in accordance with the International Conference on Harmonization's (ICH) Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice."

Mercer University IRB & Office of Research Compliance
Phone: 478-301-4101 | Email: ORC_Mercer@Mercer.Edu | Fax: 478-301-2329
1501 Mercer University Drive, Macon, Georgia 31207-0001

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS AT A
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY 4-YEAR BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTION

office location of choice. After which the researchers will analyze the data obtained. The recordings or video will be stored at Mercer University for 3 years after completion of the study.

Participation and Withdrawal
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. As a participant you may refuse to participate at anytime. To withdraw from the study please contact Kelly L. Holloway via email. To withdraw from the study, please write a brief statement and submit it to Ms. Holloway with your signature.

Questions about the Research
If you have any questions about the research, please speak with the following:

Kelly Holloway, B.A., M.A.
Holloway_KL@mercer.edu
478-832-2958

Tift College of Education Mercer University 3001 Mercer University Drive Atlanta, GA 30341. Contact number is 678-547-6559.

This project has been reviewed and approved by Mercer University's IRB. If you believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Chair, at (478) 301-4101.

You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to your satisfaction. Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this research study.

____

Signature of Research Participant   Date

____

Participant Name (Please Print)   Date

____

Signature of Researcher
Date
Rev.02/12/17
KLH

APPENDIX C

ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Kelly Lynn Holloway

DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS AT A
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY 4-YEAR BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTION

Administrator Interview Questions

1. Would you please tell me about your role at the institution?

2. What attracted you to work at this institution?

3. What were the highest priorities when developing the mission of this institution? Why?

4. How are you living the mission of this institution?

5. What outcomes contribute to the vision and operating principles? If so, how?

6. What is student success as defined by this institution?

7. What resources promote student success?

8. How does technology contribute to student success?

9. In your opinion, what behaviors within the college culture contribute to student success?

10. Is there anything you would like to add?

APPENDIX D

FACULTY FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS
Kelly Lynn Holloway

DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS AT A
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY 4-YEAR BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTION

Faculty Focus Group Introduction and Questions

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to spend time with me today. (Institution's name) will be kept anonymous for this study, and you will be given pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. This study seeks to explore the widening imbalance between admissions and graduation rates occurring at many long-standing institutions of higher education. Your institution was selected because it was founded in the twenty-first century, has a mission, vision, and operating principals built on student success, and has higher than average retention and graduate rates for an open-access institution. Your insight is extremely valuable to understand how and why this institution delivers the mission, vision, and operating principles.

1. Would each of you explain your role at the institution?
2. What attracted you to work at this institution?
3. How does working at this institution differ from others places you have worked?
4. How do you define student success?
5. What strategies and resources contribute to student success at this institution?
6. Define and describe the learning environment at this institution.
7. What challenges do you face at this institution?
8. What facilitates have changed at this institution?
9. How does the institution balance growing enrollment, retention, and graduation rates?
10. How do you live the mission of this institution?
11. Is there anything that you would like to add?

APPENDIX E

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT CONSENT

From: Rauschenberg, Sam [mailto:srauschenberg@georgia.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, June 20, 2017 8:53 AM
To: Kelly Lynn Holloway <holloway_kl@mercer.edu>
Cc: Burrell, Diane <dburrell@georgia.gov>
Subject: Subject: Permission to Use Table on Website

Hi Ms. Holloway,

If you are requesting just to include the chart/table in the report you link, that is perfectly fine as long as you appropriately cite the source of the chart in your dissertation.

Thank you,
Sam

--
Sam Rauschenberg
Deputy Director, Research, Policy, & Accountability
Governor's Office of Student Achievement
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive, SE
952 Twin Towers East
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
Phone: 404.463.3219
Fax: 404.463.1163
http://gosa.georgia.gov

From: Kelly Lynn Holloway [mailto:holloway_kl@mercer.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, June 20, 2017 8:40 AM
To: Burrell, Diane <dburrell@georgia.gov>
Subject: Permission to Use Table on Website

Hello Ms. Burrell,

It was a pleasure speaking with you this morning. Could you please advise me on how I can request and obtain permission to use the "Retention rates from year to year" table from the Complete College Georgia website under the Governor's Office of Student Achievement?

https://gosa.georgia.gov/complete-college-georgia-overview

I am a doctoral student seeking to obtain this permission for the final draft of my dissertation, which is due no later than this Friday, June 23.

I can be reached at 478-832-2958 or via email. Thank you for your help.
Kelly Holloway