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COLLABORATION BETWEEN ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND STUDENT AFFAIRS AT  
PUBLIC STATE COLLEGES IN THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Education  
in the Department of Child, Family and Community Sciences  
in the College of Education and Human Performance  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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## ABSTRACT

Throughout history, higher education has reiterated the importance and significance of collaboration between all institutional divisions and departments (Kezar, 2003). As the responsibilities and operational functions of each division have increasingly become more specialized and complex, effective collaboration remains a barrier in the optimal functioning of institutions throughout the country (Kezar).

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the current perceptions and practices of collaboration between the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions at state colleges geographically located in the Southern region of the United States, through the lens of Morten T. Hansen's T-shaped model of disciplined collaboration.

The collective voices of the research participants fostered the ability to formulate a new, current model of collaboration between the divisions of Academic Affairs division and Student Affairs at representative state institutions. The final results of this study found that although there is not one consistent model that encapsulates all of the components of effective collaboration, it does entail a deliberate willingness to embrace the human element to build personal relationships. Finally, some of the themes generated by the use of *NVivo* were cultural ethos, human element and the unification of people. Framed by trust, transparency, unification of common goals, and through the college ethos as developed through leadership, a new model emerged based on the tenets of Grounded Theory.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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A special thank you to the participants in this study. Without their dedicated participation, this study would not have been possible. I am humbled by the mentors and professional colleagues that I have had the fortunate experience of working with for the betterment of students enrolled in State/Community Colleges. Most importantly, I am extremely grateful for my loving parents, family and supportive wife, Jennie Fortunato. Without their support and belief in my ability to serve as a leader in the field of higher education, this opportunity would not have been possible.

Finally, to all of my classmates and colleagues at the University of Central Florida enrolled in the Higher Education and Policy Studies Program, I sincerely thank you for the wonderful experience we have had. *Altiora Peto!*

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## VIGNETTE

For the past 10 years, Joe has served as the Vice President of Student Affairs at a public, state college located in the southern region of the United States. He has a proven record of creating and implementing student-centered programs that promote student success. His colleague, Laura, serves as the Vice President of Academic Affairs at the same college and she also possess vast experience in leading initiatives that support student achievement. Although Joe and Laura have similar responsibilities, their roles are vastly different in respect to the daily functions associated with Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions. Joe and Laura are highly respected leaders of the college and are known for the positive manner in which they cultivate and sustain relationships with faculty, staff, and students.

The president of their college has charged them with leading a college-wide initiative on the implementation of developmental education reform. To be successful, this initiative must comprehensively acknowledge the curricular changes and the co-curricular changes that serve the best interest of the student, as well as include the requirements established by the state legislature. Although their collaborative relationship has been successful in the past, they are finding it challenging to understand the intricacies and needs of each other's division in the proper implementation of developmental educational reform. Due to the complexities and specificities of each division, they find it laborious and cumbersome to reach consensus in respect to making important decisions that will impact enrollment, retention, completion, faculty credentialing, budget allocations, and accreditation requirements. To improve the process, Joe leads from the student perspective and Laura leads from a curriculum and faculty perspective. In examination of each other's responsibilities, they recognize that each of their areas have become so entrenched in rules and regulatory requirements, coupled with the increased pressure to develop student achievement, that they find this task much more complicated and time consuming than they could have imagined.

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## Background

Historical accounts of the dynamic and changing nature of the need to collaborate between institutional divisions has continued to be one of the many on-going discussions between members of the academy. Additionally, the bureaucratic and political forces that impact higher education have had a dramatic effect on the ability for organizations to develop and sustain effective collaborative partnerships (Pace, Blumreich, & Merkle, 2006). Although the research on collaborative partnerships has reiterated the benefits of shared governance and effective collaborative relationships, increased notions that collaboration is simply a myth are gaining momentum throughout higher education (Hansen, 2009).

## Statement of the Problem

Without a commonly agreed upon understanding of collaboration, institutional divisions may have false beliefs and expectations regarding the role that each other plays within the college. Decreased collaboration may have a negative effect on the institutional culture that may impact the student experience. Unity among Academic Affairs and Student Affairs continues to be a topic of concern among members of the academy (Hansen, 2009). Often, communication and discussion between these two divisions is considered to be collaboration, without emphasis placed on shared governance, co-led task forces, and collective input from each respective division. As each division competes for limited financial resources, decreased funding, increased accountability, and increased regulation, there is increased emphasis on non-collaboration (Pace et al., 2006). Theorists have also reiterated the notion that the responsibilities and functions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs have become so differentiated, that collaboration is merely

a myth that warrants further examination (Hansen). Finally, the defining lines between cooperation and collaboration are often blurred which has resulted in professionals within higher education possessing false beliefs that they are collaborating effectively, when in reality they are not (Hansen).

Historically, faculty within the community college have been resistant to receiving input and direction from the Student Affairs division and vice-versa. Self-preservation and protection of academic freedom has fueled concern and lack of effort in the development and sustainability between faculty and Student Affairs professionals (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001). Additionally, there has been an increased emphasis on the traps created by the dysfunctional unification of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs (Hansen, 2009). Furthermore, research conducted by Aviles and the State University of New York, Buffalo College at Buffalo Social Work Department (2000) has explored the effect of bad collaboration in comparison to no collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. Ironically, as higher education continues to build systems of inclusion that reiterate student success, the differing processes and procedures among Academic Affairs and Student Affairs are becoming increasingly specialized without the need for routine collaboration (Hansen). The long-term effect of this dynamic paradigm shift has not been thoroughly examined specifically within community/state colleges located in the southern region of the United States.

Since the beginning of American higher education at Harvard in 1636, Academic Affairs has gradually infused the responsibilities currently associated with the functions assigned to the Student Affairs division (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001). The evolution of Student Affairs functionality can be traced to the historical roots of academia as the faculty served as the advisor,

counselor, and mentor. (Bourassa & Kruger). The division of Student Affairs emerged from Oxford and Cambridge Universities due to the increased needs of the students that were outside of the traditional curriculum (Bourassa & Kruger). During this time, faculty were responsible for the academic and social dimensions of the students. This can be seen as one of the first collaborative integration of services between the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions. Furthermore, the beginning of the divide between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs can be traced to the 1600's as faculty reiterated the burden they had to educate the student on co-curricular matters (Bourassa & Kruger). As higher education evolved, it became apparent that the holistic development of each student could not be the sole responsibility of the faculty member. This separation of duties associated with teaching the student the formal curriculum and the co-curriculum became apparent in the 1600's (Bourassa & Kruger). Additional staff were hired in an effort to reduce the faculty's burden in managing all aspects of each student's holistic development.

Although the duties of faculty in the 1600's transitioned from the holistic development of each student to the primary focus on teaching, the birth of the Student Affairs division primarily took place from 1900 through WWII (Boswell & Wilson, 2004). With the implementation of the Student Personnel Movement, the traditional faculty roles were defined and separated from the co-curricular responsibilities. This new organizational structure that resulted from the Student Personnel Movement is considered the birth of the current Student Affairs division (Boswell & Wilson).

### Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine the current status of collaboration from the perspective of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs at representative institutions located in the southern region of the United States of America. This qualitative research study explored and identified the experiences, perceptions, and understanding of collaboration between the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs professionals at colleges that are located in the southern region of the United States of America.

Although it is well established that collaboration typically improves the processes, procedures, and communication among any corporate or educational entity, the need and desire to collaborate within higher education is changing at an alarming rate (Gulley & Mullendore, 2014). This research is significant as the current literature regarding the importance and understanding of collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs within the state college system is limited. Research has primarily focused on the role of collaboration among Ivy League colleges, private liberal-arts institutions, and residential four-year institutions. For the past decade, community/state colleges have been regarded as an integrative, collaborative entity, without definitive evidence and research that clearly defines the specific best practices pertaining to collaboration within the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions. Furthermore, differing perceptions and conceptual ideas related to authentic collaboration often results in departmental work conducted in isolation. The changing paradigm of intra-institutional practices of collaboration, declining collaboration, or non-collaboration is contributing to the changing dynamic of higher education.

The results of this research study are used to identify themes and provide insight and guidance on the current practice, or non-practice of collaboration between the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions at state colleges located in the southern region of the United States.

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework utilized for this study is that of Morten T. Hansen. Hansen developed the theoretical belief that non-collaboration is better than bad collaboration among organizations (Hansen, 2009). As a professor of management at the University of California, Berkeley, Hansen's research has focused on collaboration and corporate transformation through the theoretical lens of disciplined collaboration. According to Hansen, intra-organizational collaboration has dramatically changed due to the specificity and the complexities of each department within any large-scale organization (Hansen). Additionally, Hansen has theorized that very few educational organizations obtain the optimum amount of collaboration. Whereas many organizations over-collaborate, while others practice non-collaboration, society has over-emphasized the power of effective collaboration. False beliefs regarding authentic collaborative initiatives within higher education has had a negative effective on the academy (Hansen).

Hansen theorizes that misunderstandings and false beliefs regarding true collaboration have pervaded large-scale organizations, which has resulted in lost time, decreased productivity, and lost focus on important factors that contribute to organizational success (Hansen, 2009). In addition, Hansen theorizes that most institutional leaders believe that company-wide collaboration is essential for the accomplishment of organizational goals. However, Hansen's research supports the belief that most organizational collaborative efforts are not successful, backfire, and waste valuable time, money, and resources. Hansen's theoretical perspective of



disciplined collaboration reiterates the importance of beginning any collaborative initiative with a defined goal in mind. According to Hansen, the goal of collaboration is not collaboration in itself, but rather to garner better results.

Hansen (2009) devoted his work to the evolution and creation of dynamic business environments that exude collaborative practices that produce positive results. Although Hansen's work primarily focused on the role of collaboration within business and industry, the principles he has examined can be closely articulated and practiced throughout higher education. As community colleges continually refine their institutional practices to produce a greater degree of student achievement, the current trend is for them to adapt collaborative models that mirror those of business and industry (Hansen). Hansen reiterates the need to institutionalize disciplined collaboration through the unification of common goals. For collaboration to be effective within higher education, it is essential that leaders develop a compelling unifying goal that results in groups committing to the cause that is greater than their own individual or departmental goals (Hansen). Historically, departments within community colleges tended to confuse competition with collaboration (American Association of Community Colleges [AACCC], 2012).

Currently, community colleges are witnessing a paradigm shift in this former thinking as they are embracing Hansen's framework that reiterates the power of competition and collaboration as complementary forces (Hansen, 2009). Through Hansen's research, he has firmly developed the hypothetical notion that the institutional leaders who talk of "collaboration for results" will yield a higher degree of successes than do leaders who speak of "collaboration" simply for the sake of being inclusive (Hansen, 2009, p.35).

One of the most effective and prominent models of effective collaboration stem from Hansen's investigative research (Hansen, 2009). Through Hansen's work, the T-shaped management model of collaboration has been developed and implemented by corporations such as Amoco, British Petroleum, and Apple. According to Hansen:

T-shaped management is a cross-functional management model that promotes sharing and knowledge transfer at all levels of the organization, (the horizontal bar of the T), while promoting individual expertise, (the vertical bar of the T). Companies that adopt a T-shaped management reap many benefits. The more an organization approaches this management model, the more likely it is able to identify, capitalize and disseminate knowledge, foster collaboration, and facilitate problem solving. (p.56)

In an effort for community colleges to increase their good collaborative practices and decrease the negative habits that impede successful outcomes, it is essential for managers to practice T-shaped management behaviors (Hansen, 2009). Results of institutionalizing T-shaped collaborative models include improved results in the individual's job performance as well as the positive results achieved by the organization through collaborating across the company. Most importantly, Hansen reiterates the need for leaders to recognize when not to collaborate. Leaders within Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions should decline collaborative opportunities when the initiative does not produce value, and more importantly when it cannot be measured, assessed, and evaluated through comprehensive data (Hansen).

Hansen has theorized that it is paramount for employees to recognize when it is necessary to collaborate, and when it is not necessary to collaborate (2009). Common limitations to effective collaborative practices according to Hansen include the manner in which modern managers construct barriers that hinder people from collaborating. In addition, Hansen's model of Disciplined Collaboration reiterates the importance of evaluating opportunities for collaboration, identification of barriers to effective collaboration, and the ability to tailor

solutions that decrease ineffective collaboration (Hansen). Furthermore, Hansen has reiterated the issue relating to the social stigma commonly associated with not collaborating across departments and divisions. Societal dogma has touted the negative perception that one receives in an organization for not collaborating. However, for effective collaboration to work, leaders must instill a rule to help them decide when it is not necessary to collaborate. Hansen indicates that leaders must consider the opportunity costs and collaboration costs and collectively agree to only collaborate if the net value is greater than the return. According to Hansen, leaders should only embark on a collaborative venture if the net value of collaboration is greater than the return minus opportunity costs and collaboration costs. Figure 1 is a visual representation of Hansen’s formula for determining when collaboration should happen. This figure is an adaptation from Hansen (2009). Permission to utilize this figure has been granted by Dr. Morton Hansen as indicated in Appendix F.

$$\boxed{\text{Collaboration premium}} = \boxed{\text{return on project}} - \boxed{\text{opportunity costs-collaboration costs}}$$

*Figure 1: Hansen’s formula for determining if collaboration should occur*

According to Hansen (2009), Disciplined Collaboration also entails the routine practice of recognizing and removing common barriers that impede effective interactions. These barriers arise when people are not willing to reach outside their own units to gather input, advice, and support. Often, this unwillingness to formulate effective partnerships with people outside of one’s unit is a result of motivational problems that are the result of many factors. These factors include the human element of fostering an insular culture as a protective mechanism.

Welcoming the input and viewpoints of others outside of the group may create additional

frustration and additional work. In addition, if people believe that they have a higher status than others, they tend to be less reluctant to collaborate with those who they deem to be of a lower rank or status. This status gap is one of the largest barriers to effective collaboration and centers on the attitudes and beliefs of the individual employee (Hansen).

Additional barriers to effective collaboration include self-reliance, fear, and the general unwillingness of people to go outside of their own department and seek input from others (Hansen, 2009). Hansen describes fear as the hesitation to reveal problems outside of one's own department. Due to the increased competitive job market, self-protection, and the removal of negative perceptions from other departments, collaboration has dramatically changed within the past decade (Hansen).

To improve the collaborative culture of organizations, Hansen has developed a model that serves as a framework for breaking down the barriers previously identified. This framework entails the utilization of a lever system that creates positive and effective collaborative practices among organizations. Through analysis of Hansen's concepts of Disciplined Collaboration, I have visualized his theoretical depiction of collaboration as identified in Figure 2.

## Hansen's Disciplined Collaborative Model Visualized by Geoffrey Fortunato

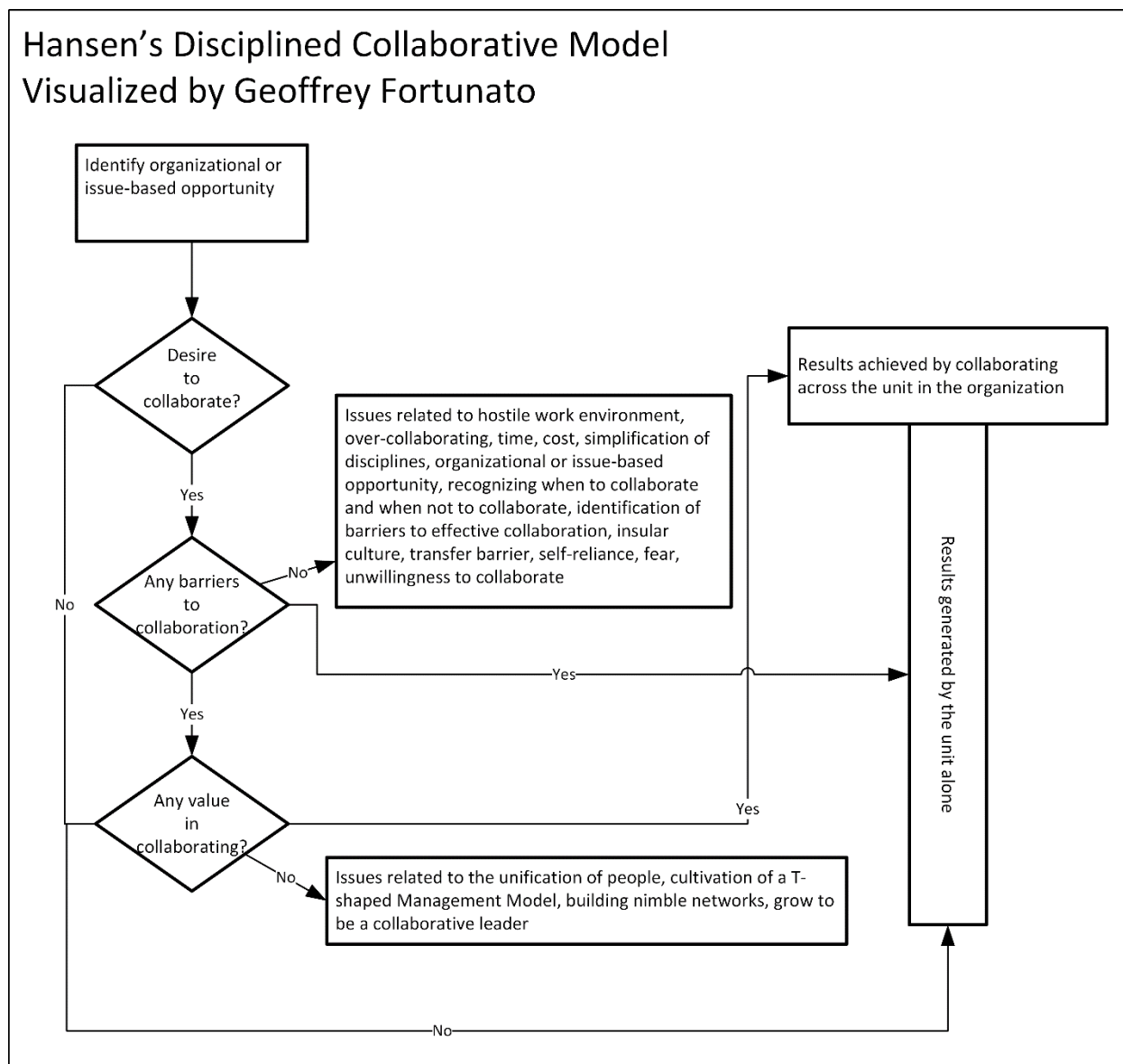


Figure 2: Visualization of Hansen's Disciplined Collaborative Model

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The first lever identified by Hansen is the unification of all employees across all divisions (Hansen, 2009). It is essential that leaders develop and instill a compelling unifying goal that allows employees to commit to a cause larger than their own individual goals. To be effective, the unifying goal must invoke a common fate, be simple and discrete, instill a passion among all

employees, as well as remove competition within the organization (Hansen). The second lever needed according to Hansen is the need to build nimble networks within the organization.

Nimble networks that are not bloated, but rather, exude the ability for organizations to build bridges, improve diversity, and focus on building on the weak ties within the organization are essential. Organizations that cultivate a culture that continually embraces the positive outcomes associated with the transfer of knowledge across units do not succumb to the traps associated with bad collaboration (Hansen).

The third lever identified by Hansen is the need for organizational leaders to continually grow and develop a collaborative leadership style (Hansen, 2009). According to Hansen, collaborative leaders have a high degree of accountability, involve others in the decision making process, and transcend narrow agendas to achieve the larger goal (Hansen). Furthermore, leaders who practice effective collaboration instill effective T-shaped management. Due to the specificity and complexity of this fourth lever, it was analyzed in depth in a subsequent heading.

#### Research Questions

This qualitative research study was guided by two primary research questions:

1. How do the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at public state colleges located in the southern United States, perceive their collaboration with each other?
2. How do the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at public state colleges located in the southern United States construct collaborations?

To establish clear links between my research questions and the selected theoretical framework, the illustrations in Table1 have been developed.

*Table 1: Research Questions Linked to Hansen’s Theoretical Framework*

| <b>RESEARCH QUESTION</b>  | <b>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b>   |
|---|--|
| RQ1: How do the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at public state colleges located in the southern United States, perceive their collaboration with each other? | Barriers to collaboration: hostile work environment, over-collaborating, time, cost, simplification of effective collaboration, specialization of disciplines, recognizing when to collaborate and when not to collaborate, identification of barriers to effective collaboration, insular culture, transfer barrier, self-reliance, fear, unwillingness to collaborate. |
| RQ2: How do the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at public state colleges located in the southern United States construct collaborations?                      | Strategies related to successful collaboration: unification of people, cultivation of a T-shaped Management Model, building nimble networks, grow to be a collaborative leader.  |

Definition of Terms

Academic Affairs: The division of an institution of higher education responsible for the delivery, integrity, and curriculum offerings that lead to the conference of academic credentials (Newton & Smith, 2008).

Collaborate: To work with a person or a group in order to achieve or do something; to work jointly on an activity. *“If the world knew how to collaborate well, the world would simply work better”* (Hansen, 2009)

Partnership: An understanding between two or more participants, “partners,” who agree to work together for shared benefit. Partners in this agreement may be individuals and/or organizations (Burns, 1995).

Perception: the way that an individual or organization thinks about or understands an idea or concept (Bourke, 2014).

State College: A college that is owned and run by one of the states of the U.S. as part of the state's public educational system; a college that is financially supported by a state

government, often specializes in a branch of technical or professional education, and often forms part of the state university. (Florida College System, 2011)

Student Affairs: The discipline practiced by all of those who work in the general field and its numerous specialties. It has a body of knowledge, a professional literature, a long established professional philosophy, a theoretical base (student development theory), and a set of commonly recognized jobs and functions. Student affairs focuses on all things related to the student and the student's life in the college but outside the classroom. Student affairs also refers to the administrative unit of the college in which the services, programs, functions, and activities with this focus are housed (American Council on Education, 1983).

#### Limitations and Delimitations

Qualitative studies contain a number of limitations. Although the results of this study may be transferable under similar conditions, the lack of generalizability in any qualitative research must be delineated (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). As this study consisted of eight participants from four institutions located in the southern United States, the results should not be transferable or generalizable to state colleges throughout the country. Due to the professional experiences of the Chief Academic Affairs and Chief Student Affairs officers at the institutions participating in this research, coupled with the progressive, dynamic, and unique nature of the state colleges participating, the results may not be generalizable throughout America.

Additionally, the researcher conducting this study is an employee within the Student Affairs division at one of the institutions participating in this research study. Although the researcher in this study works in the Student Affairs division, he is not one of the Chief Student Affairs officers that participated in this study.



Demographics and structure are unique and highly diversified for individual states located in the region of interest. Therefore, the results from each participating institution may be highly variable. Furthermore, additional limitations include the length of time of employment in their role as either Chief Academic Affairs or Student Affairs officer, professional experience, collegiate history, and campus ethos.

### Positionality

In an effort for this research to be generalizable and applicable, it is essential that the responses of the participants accurately depict their honest and transparent perceptions of collaboration. My individual identity and leadership position within the consortium of colleges involved in this research may have potential impact to the themes generated by their interview responses. Bourke (2014) indicated that one's perception of the world in which we interact can influence the responses of the participant. In addition, the researcher's personal identity can impact the manner in which the participants respond (Bourke). The individual identity that I have with the colleagues that voluntarily participated in this study could influence the research findings. The participant's ability to effectively reflect and respond to the questions pertaining to their perception(s) of collaboration could be altered due to the common belief that collaboration is expected to be a valued member of the academy.

Throughout the past 19 years, I have been actively involved in leadership positions within higher education. These leadership positions require and demand a great deal of collegiality, collaboration with internal and external entities, as well as a passion for the development and sustainability of effective partnerships. During the past decade, I have witnessed a dynamic paradigm shift in the manner in which the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions

develop and sustain collaborative partnerships. Many of these changes are reflected in the literature review section of Chapter 2.

As a Student Affairs leader within higher education, collaborative work occurs daily with a variety of professionals throughout the college as well as throughout the consortium. As a result of these experiences, the possibility exists that I have pre-conceived notions regarding the current status of collaboration within the state college system. It is expected that the interview responses may contradict my personal experiences and pre-conceived notions. These differences were handled in a professional manner and welcomed throughout the interview process. These ideals and perceptions that I possess are a result of personal experiences involving effective or non-effective collaborative engagements. Bourke (2014) also indicated that it is paramount for the researcher to acknowledge and recognize these biases as they could have the potential to impact the results of the study. In an effort to limit the personal biases that I have that naturally exist due to these experiences, I have chosen to utilize Grounded Theory methodology.

Due to my ability to remain open and objective to the valued feedback and input from others, I was able to remove any pre-conceived biases when conducting the personal interviews with the participants. As an administrator within higher education, I have a natural inclination to view the perceptions and understandings of others through a variety of lenses. In addition, although the literature on collaboration is vast and encompasses a variety of themes, I currently do not have a thorough understanding of the current practice or non-practice of collaboration between the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions at state colleges located in the southern region of the United States. As a dedicated researcher, I was able to effectively put my personal experiences and biases aside when conducting this research.

### Organization of the Study

A comprehensive review of the relevant literature is provided in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 contains information about the methodology utilized for this study including the data collection method. Chapter 4 contains a review of the research participants' included in this qualitative study and Chapter 5 encompasses a thorough analysis of the research findings. Chapter 6 reiterates the themes generated and Chapter 7 presents the new, current model of collaboration through the application of Grounded Theoretical methodology. This study ends with conclusions, recommendations, and implications in Chapter 8.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

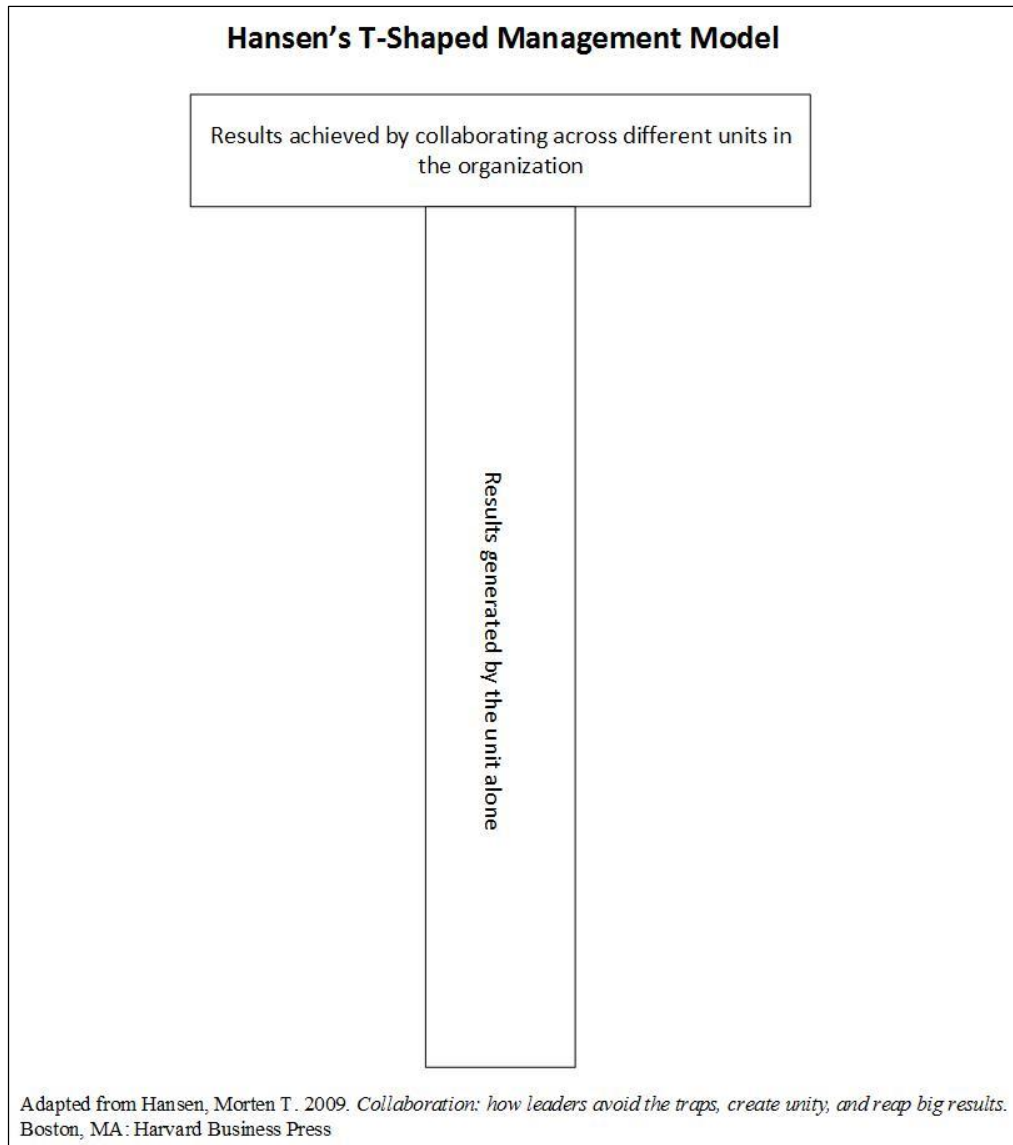
### Introduction

This chapter is a comprehensive review of the role that collaboration and partnerships have among the Division of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. Historical and present-day practices of integrating the formal curriculum and co-curriculum were analyzed. Additional items reviewed include the myths and misconceptions of collaboration and best practices of collaboration that pertain to student success.

### Cultivating T-Shaped Management for Effective Collaboration

As community colleges continue to serve the diverse needs of their students, they must frequently refine and implement methodologies that foster student success and achievement. One of the greatest challenges facing community colleges in the achievement of the aforementioned goals is in the manner in which coalitions are built and sustained within the organization (Hansen, 2009). Higher education has dramatically increased its specialization and complexity within the past decade. This has resulted in decreased efficiency and efficacy in collaborative partnerships (Hansen). In addition, the increased specialization of each department within higher education has resulted in fragmentation of the collective understanding of each respective department. Hansen reiterated the dynamic and swift changes in the growth of specialization in a variety of professions including doctors, engineers, managers, designers, consultants, and professors. In an effort to decrease the fragmentation of these professions, Hansen developed the T-shaped management model. In this model, the vertical part of the T represents people who can perform their own individual work very well, and the horizontal part

of the T represents people who contribute effectively across the organization (Hansen). A visual depiction of the T-shaped framework is located in Figure 3.



*Figure 3: Visual representation of Hansen's T-Shaped theoretical framework*

Hansen's (2009) research indicates the need for organizations to ensure that their employees exemplify the ideals identified in his T-shaped management model. If employees are unable to actively demonstrate and practice these two ideals, effective collaboration is not

possible according to Hansen. Although Hansen's model will not guarantee that collaborative initiatives are successful, his framework serves as the foundation for the effective building and sustaining of these partnerships. The fundamental challenge of building effective partnerships that continues to elude leaders is how the organization can improve its results, decrease wasteful collaboration, and collaborate effectively (Hansen).

Community colleges throughout the country continue to change, adjust, and implement innovative strategies that improve the effective functioning of their own respective department (Schuh, 1999). Due to the time, energy, and resources dedicated to these strategies, campus leaders often do not find it possible to cultivate these partnerships with other departments within their own organization (Rahim, 2001). Hansen (2009) reiterated that the rate at which institutional departments are unwilling to devote the energy and time needed to cultivate successful partnerships has surpassed alarming. Furthermore, the long-term effect(s) of this changing dynamic has not been adequately researched. This may result in the dramatic transformation of proper organizational functioning to a more isolated model (Cottrell & Parpart, 2006). In addition to the dramatic changes in how organizations formulate and sustain effective partnerships, Hansen identified one area that will change rapidly in the future which he defined as "online collaboration" (p.86). According to Hansen, online collaboration will become pervasive and much more powerful than one could imagine within the next decade. This is primarily due to the rapid expansion of serving the educational needs and expectations of today's learners (Hansen).

According to Hansen (2009), one of the most important aspects in cultivating T-shaped managers is in the selection of the right kind of employees during the interview and hiring

process. Through the hiring of the right people, coupled with the promotion of the people who demonstrate T-shaped behaviors, positive organizational change that fosters improved collaboration may be possible (Hansen). In addition, Hansen indicated that attempting to change the attitudes and behaviors of employees who are not demonstrating T-shaped behaviors is not effective. Rather than trying to change employees and mold them into T-shaped managers, Hansen recommended to develop the organizational culture through internal enculturation of effective collaboration. Through the routine practice of hiring T-shaped leaders and through the gradual internal enculturation of collaboration, organizations are able to improve their ability to achieve their stated goals (Hansen).

#### Impact of Ineffective Organizational Collaboration According to Hansen

In an attempt to provide the services that consumers expect, it is a commonly agreed upon notion that the organization in which they are receiving the services from, practice integrative partnerships within the organization (Rahim, 2001). The concept of “strength in numbers” in relation to the formation of integrative partnerships within an organization is commonly understood and practiced throughout the world. Hansen (2009) reiterated the negative outcomes of organizations that function as separated divisions, rather than as a common entity. Hansen’s example of the consequence(s) of non-collaboration within an organization can be observed in the Sony Corporation’s inability to integrate the functionality of separate departments. Sony was actually the first company to invent the I-pad (Hansen). Due to the ineffective partnerships, collaboration, and lack of cohesive partnerships, their research and development department failed to discuss progress with the marketing department. The marketing department in turn, failed to collaborate with the development team, who then failed

to effectively work with the production and sales team (Hansen). During this same time, the Apple Corporation effectively developed the first I-pad as a result of effective collaboration, cooperation, as well as through healthy partnerships.

Although this example is attributed to business and industry, the inability of organizations to effectively collaborate, resulted in a myriad of negative consequences for the Sony Corporation as well as for the consumer. In the societal organization referred to as “Higher Education,” the consumer is the student. Extrapolation of Sony’s experiences to higher education would result in the student’s collegiate experience being compromised due to the divisional unwillingness to effectively collaborate (Hansen, 2009).

### Community College History

History has proven that the process of improving one’s life and the world in which one interacts can be the result of the education and society in which a group actively participates (Long, 2012). Without an organized, structured and developed way of sharing ideas, values, and inherent facts, the process of acquiring and retaining these skills may be diminished (Long). Society has continued its gradual evolution and development through our interests and desire to learn. Without this inherent drive to improve one’s intellectual, political, economic and social stratification within society, it seems prudent to suggest that the evolution of industry and technology would not have transpired at the pace in which it did (Altbach, Berhahl, & Gumport, 2005). The development of the community college system has had a profound effect on the ever-changing dynamic of higher education (Altbach, et al.). Since 2010, community colleges throughout the country have experienced vast and dynamic changes in relation to the implementation of new programs and degrees that were once only offered at the university level



(Rodkin, 2011). These changes are a result of the changing student needs and community needs in relation to career and job preparation as well as a result of increased competition (Rodkin). In an effort to examine these changes, it is imperative to understand the broad history of the community college system.

The community college system is unique in many facets. The primary impetus for the development of the community college was to serve the needs of the local communities and to respond to the growing need for technical and vocational professions (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). The development of community colleges throughout the country can be traced to former president of the University of Chicago, William Rainey Harper (Cohen & Brawer). Harper believed that the nation's universities could better serve students if they were not overwhelmed with educating their students on the basic learning skills that are often taught during the first two years of college. Harper and other leading educators firmly believed that there needed to be an educational institution that assisted with closing the gap between high school and university level education. This founding premise and belief has served as the primary impetus for the continued growth and development of two-year institutions throughout the country (Cohen & Brawer).

From these guiding principles established by Harper and colleagues, the first junior college was founded in 1901 in Joliet, Illinois. Joliet Junior College began as the result of an experimental post-high school program between William Rainey Harper and Stanley Brown, the superintendent of Joliet High School (AACC, 2012). Research has indicated that this partnership is an example of one of the first collaborative initiatives that were developed between a collegiate institution and high school. Community colleges also evolved to serve the students who were financially and geographically bound to the location in which they lived (Witt,

Wattenbarger, Gollatscheck, & Suppiger, 1994). Since 1901, community colleges have focused their mission on the preservation of the three primary aspects of higher education: access, affordability, and accountability (AACC, 2012).

Although the community college/junior college movement in the 1900's primarily occurred in the geographical region of the Midwest, there were 74 junior colleges established by 1920 (AACC, 2012). Due to the integration of the general education curriculum and the vocational curriculum, these institutions served the educational needs of a growing industrialized nation. By 1940, there were 238 junior colleges established, comprised of students that would otherwise not have had the opportunity to earn a degree due to geographic and financial boundaries (AACC).

One of the primary influences that contributed to the community college movement in the United States was the change from a mainly agrarian society, to a technological and innovative society (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Society demanded the need for a more educated populous due to the ingenuity and economic development that was taking place prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, higher education was considered a privilege reserved only for the wealthy (AACC, 2012). This differentiation of economic social class structure negatively influenced the collegiate experience, as it did not embrace the positive student learning outcomes that naturally occur when diversity is incorporated into the educational environment. The United States labor market began to expand upon the conclusion of the Great Depression, as the country became more industrialized (Wattenbarger & Albertson, 2013). The need to develop a more specialized, highly trained workforce also contributed to the rise of the community college within America. As high school graduation rates increased, the need for these students to continue with their

technical training also increased. Cohen and Brawer stated, “the simplest overarching reason for the growth of community college was that an increasing number of demands were being placed on schools at every level” (p.2).

Although there is a myriad of factors that contributed to the community college movement, the greatest expansion occurred upon the conclusion of World War II (Wattenbarger & Albertson, 2013). Significant legislative acts that promoted the growth of community colleges were instrumental in the national movement of educating all students to serve the Industrial Revolution (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). One of the most significant legislative acts that assisted community colleges with increased enrollment was the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (Wattenbarger & Albertson). This act is commonly referred to as the GI Bill as the primary focus was to provide educational access for the veterans who served our country (Wattenbarger & Albertson). Under the leadership of President Roosevelt, the GI Bill served as the primary access point for veterans who were not prepared for the rigor of the traditional university curriculum, or who were geographically unable to attend a traditional university due to familial responsibilities (Wattenbarger & Albertson). By 1946, 46% of the students enrolled in a junior college were veterans of World War II (Witt et al., 1994).

The rapid growth of junior colleges resulted in the federal government taking an interest in the curriculum, co-curriculum, as well as in the assessment of student learning outcomes. The government wanted to ensure that the ideals taught to students were articulated with the needs of the industrialized nation. In 1947, President Harry Truman implemented the President’s Commission on Higher Education, which was commonly referred to as the Truman Commission (Wattenbarger & Albertson, 2013). This 28-member leadership task force was charged with the

development of a master plan for higher education and to evaluate the success of the nation's junior colleges (Wattenbarger, et.al 2007). The Truman Commission realized the need to expand opportunity at the junior college level and to provide access for all students similar to the effect that the Serviceman's Readjustment Act had on the two- year institutions. Due to the findings of the Truman Commission, national recognition and support of junior colleges fostered the positive continual evolution of these educational institutions (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Upon the conclusion of the Truman Commission report, junior colleges resoundingly changed their names to community colleges. This was in response to the primary goal of two-year institutions, which was to provide the educational needs of local communities (Cohen & Brawer).

As community colleges continued to evolve with the formal implementation of Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and the Associate of Applied Science degrees, the need to develop sustainable articulation programs and partnerships with the university system began to flourish (AACC, 2012). The concept of building strong academic partnerships with the university system provided a venue for students to experience a smooth transition to a four-year institution (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). The development of these articulation agreements has had a substantial positive impact on the growth and sustainability of the nation's community college system. The growth and expansion of community colleges was significant between 1940 and 1960. During this period, there were 174 new community colleges created within the United States (AACC). The success and job placement rates during this time fueled additional growth between 1960 and 1970 as an additional 497 community colleges were established (AACC). Currently, there are approximately 12 million students enrolled in the 1,167 community colleges throughout America (AACC).

### Emergence of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs in the Community College

In the early years of higher education, Student Affairs work was conducted by faculty and administrators (Frost, Strom, Downey, Schultz, & Holland, 2010). The multiple roles played by faculty decreased their ability to focus on the traditional curriculum. As the need to provide services to students outside of the classroom became more evident, the Student Affairs division was created (Kezar, 2003). Once the duties were separated, the need for integration of the academic, experiential, developmental, and practical development of the student was prominent (Kezar). The division of Student Affairs is considered to be relatively new in comparison to the division of Academic Affairs (Kuh, 1985). Whereas the founding constructs of the Academic Affairs division can be traced to the early 1600's, one of the first official gatherings of Student Affairs professionals began in the 1940s (Kuh, 1993).

### Community College Trends

Current trends in higher education include increased accountability for student success, student completion, and student retention (Roggow, 2014). The nation's accountability movement has resulted in increased pressures to increase student achievement rates through strategic collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions. Community colleges are more susceptible to the increased accountability measures than the traditional four-year institutions are due to the influence of economic factors (Roggow). Ironically, as student success determines the fiscal and cultural health of the organization, the need and desire to collaborate on collegiate initiatives that foster student achievement have dramatically changed. The growing disconnect that has occurred in the past decade between Academic Affairs and

Student Affairs is primarily the result of each division becoming more specialized (Frost et al., 2010).

Specialized functionality of each respective area of collegiate institutions results in each area operating in isolation (Frost et al., 2010). This results in a dysfunctional organization as decreased communication often results in isolation, fragmentation, and ultimately, negatively impacts the student's experience while attending the institution. The cultural differences that exist between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions are thought to be the greatest contributing factor to decreased collaboration within the academy (Burns, 1995). Whereas faculty normally gravitate to issues pertaining to classroom instruction, collegiality, tenure, and curriculum development, Student Affairs professionals focus on student engagement, enrollment, advising, and student achievement (Burns). Although positive strides are made in respect to student achievement when these areas form effective partnerships, a common challenge is for both areas to understand the responsibilities and commonalities of their priorities (Frost et al., 2010). Moreover, creating an environment where both divisions recognize the benefits and commonalities has continued to be a challenge for college administrators throughout the country. Effective and sustained partnerships that foster student success have proven effective when both areas formulate and implement shared values of common interests that lead to student success (Burns).

The multifaceted mission of America's state and community colleges is collectively understood as the entity that prepares students for academic transfer, career and technical education, adult education and remediation, and workforce development (Townsend & Shelley, 2008). Each of the aforementioned aspects of community colleges requires some level of

collaboration and partnerships both internally and externally for them to survive (Townsend & Shelley). These collaborative practices are increasingly being scrutinized by state, federal, and local constituents in response to concern of monetary waste (Ales, Rodrigues, Snyder, & Conklin, 2011). Therefore, increased pressure has been placed on higher educational institutions to document and assess the resources in which they have been provided by federal and state governments.

### Community Colleges and Organizational Partnerships

Historically, the role of the student affairs practitioner was the responsibility of the faculty (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007). Faculty in the 1600's through the 1700's were considered to be the professor, administrator, and served as the overall support structure for the students (Ambrose, Hauschild, & Ruppe, 2008). These multiple roles played by the faculty were the first evidence of student affairs practitioners within higher education. Their philosophy and practice gradually evolved from controlling the student, to the modern day philosophy of student affairs which consists of educating the development of the student in a holistic manner (Dale & Drake, 2005).

Due to the continued evolution of higher education coupled with the need to comply with legislative acts, the 1960s was a period of dramatic change associated with the study of the “*whole*” student (McKee, 1993). The study of the whole student during the 1960s was referred to as the student development movement as it touted the importance of educating the mental, emotional, and physical aspects of college students (McKee). When the voting laws were lowered to the age of 18 in 1970, the dynamic landscape of student affairs dramatically changed as these students who were enrolling in institutions were considered to be adults (McKee).

Increased accountability and increased federal oversight of higher education fostered the connotations of Chief Academic Affairs Officer (CAO) and Chief Student Affairs Officer (CSAO), at institutions throughout the country during the 1980s (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001). These terms are used to identify the highest level executive in charge of each division and are synonymous with the terms Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs (Bourassa & Kruger). As both divisions continually refine and implement practices related to student success, the overlap of their respected roles has become more evident (Rahim, 2001).

#### Formulation of Organizational Partnerships in the Community College

Although many community colleges are now considered “state institutions,” it is paramount for educators to remember that the one item that distinguishes them from all other educational entities is the term: “community” (Rodkin, 2011). “*Communis*” is the Latin derivative that refers to fellowship (Rodkin). Knowles (1980) stated:

a true Community College connotes an institution that has developed beyond an isolated entity into an institution seeking full partnership with its community (p.37).

Knowles firmly believed in the power of educational organizations forming collaborative relationships with external entities. However, to improve the student experience, Knowles theorized that the same interest and dedication of forming external partnerships should transcend into the internal divisions of each community college.

The responsibility of educating students in an open-access community college setting is often complex, due to the increased needs of these students (Pace et al., 2006). Community challenges and problems have become more evident within the past decade (Pace et al.). In an effort to appropriately respond to these challenges, community colleges must formulate effective



organizational partnerships (Kussrow, 1991). Decreased financial allocations, coupled with increased student support services, has been the primary impetus for integration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs (Frost et al., 2010). Through the combination of resources, it is believed that staff time can be better allocated to expand each division's primary area of service (Kussrow). Additional benefits of forming organizational partnerships include, but are not limited to, reduced costs, better utilization of equipment, non-duplication of services, as well as lower tax utilization (Kussrow).

#### Institutional Culture and Collaboration

Effective collaboration among all divisions of any academic institution is paramount to the positive development of institutional culture (Ambrose et al., 2008). Magola (2005) defines institutional culture as the customs, rituals, and commonly accepted values shared by members of the academic organization. In an effort to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the culture within a college is formed, one must closely examine the historical, political, and economic forces that have influenced the organization over time (Newton & Smith, 2008). Institutional culture and organizational culture serve as two driving forces that shape the experiences of students, faculty, and staff that comprise the educational community (Newton & Smith). Organizational culture relates to the pattern of behaviors that the people who comprise the organization exhibit, institutional culture is influenced over an extended period of time (Ambrose et al.). These two divergent ideals influence the relationship or non-relationship between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.

Community colleges throughout the country are challenged with meeting the needs of first generation students, low-income students, as well as the need to supply remedial education

(Degen & Sheldahl, 2007). To meet these expectations, Harvey and Knight (1996) encourage the strong linkage between developmental programming that seeks to ameliorate these challenges. Increased emphasis on the holistic education of the student should be incorporated into the routine pedagogy and embedded into the culture of each community college (Harvey & Knight). Institutional culture is created over time and is heavily dependent upon factors related to organizational hierarchy, leadership style, historical institutional practices, as well as political and economic factors (Cook & Lewis, 2007). Currently, there is increased interest from academic affairs and student affairs practitioners pertaining to the need for collaborative initiatives (Degen & Sheldahl). Although the community colleges can benefit from this renewed interest in forming partnerships that produce student achievement, the cultural ethos of the institutions must support and cultivate these partnerships (Dale & Drake, 2005).

Community colleges are tasked with overcoming financial limitations, increasing student success and retention rates, as well as serving as the primary mechanism through which the citizens of local communities receive a collegiate education (Degen & Sheldahl, 2007). These challenges are insurmountable to overcome through the isolated operations of segmented divisional operations. Through the institutionalization of effective collaborative practices, a culture of cooperation is developed that can support the systemic changes related to student success and retention (Dale & Drake, 2005). Kezar (2003) indicated that the creation of a collaborative culture is an enduring process that involves the alteration of attitudinal beliefs, values, underlying assumptions, myths, and rituals by all members of the organization. The college must institutionally embrace, support, define, and prepare all members of the community college to refine vocabulary, learn and apply new information that was traditionally outside of its

role, as well as adapt to institutional norms (Dale & Drake). Specifically, a paradigm shift in the traditional thinking of employees will gradually happen if they were to accept and practice responsibilities that are not ornate to the position they hold within the specific division. When faculty present at new student orientations and when student affairs professionals become familiar with research and pedagogical practices that promote student learning, cross-functional understanding and awareness occurs throughout the institution (Cook & Lewis, 2007).

Prior research reiterated eight best practices to build, or rebuild, a successful partnership (Kezar, 2003). These best practices include, but are not limited to, the following ideals: (a) be opportunistic, (b) control the budget, (c) capitalize on turnover, (d) avoid collisions of culture, (e) design links to ongoing institutional assessment initiatives, (f) get press, and then get more press, (g) develop board awareness and support, and (h) don't become attached. Although the aforementioned ideals can be attributed to any large organization or educational entity, the most common issue within the academy tends to be the collision of culture between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs (Dale & Drake, 2005).

Community colleges are complex and systematic entities comprised of a variety of organizational cultures (Kuh, 1993). The study of organizational culture is firmly grounded in the underpinnings of sociology, anthropology, and psychology (Kuh). The role of organizational culture as related to collaboration within higher education is significant as it helps to identify factors that contribute or hinder effective partnerships (Dale & Drake, 2005). There are a variety of theoretical perspectives and definitions of the meaning of culture as related to community colleges. The most applicable theoretical framework for understanding culture in the academic setting can be understood through the lens of social constructionism (Mishra, 2014). The

primary application of social construction relates to how organizations develop a shared meaning, where members of the organization engage in a collective understanding of reality (Mishra). Organizational commonalities and collective interpretations that are in harmony with one another strengthen the unity and effective operation of the institution (Mishra).

Berquist and Pawlak (2008) identified the six cultures that are found in academic institutions. These distinct, interrelated cultures have had a dramatic effect on how institutional dynamics and organizational operations are constructed (Berquist & Pawlak). Additionally, Berquist and Pawlak theorize that the degree in which institutional collaboration is practiced is highly dependent on the ability of these six distinct cultures to form a comprehensive understanding of each other. The six cultures that comprise institutions of higher education are the following: The Collegial Culture, Managerial Culture, Developmental Culture, Advocacy Culture, Virtual Culture, and the Tangible Culture (Berquist & Pawlak). Institutional collaboration is positively impacted by the ability for each of these cultures to find commonality and unity through their respective lens (Aviles & State University of New York, Buffalo College at Buffalo Social Work Department, 2000). Institutional leaders can decrease the potential for conflict, through their understanding of the cultural differences that exist (Love, Kuh, MacKay, & Hardy, 1993).

Current literature is divided into two subcategories referred to as the cultural attributes that foster strong collaborations, and the attributes that serve as traditional barriers to those collaborations (Hansen, 2009). Institutional departments that operate in isolation were once touted as outliers that did not significantly contribute to the continued evolution of the academy. However, as collegiate divisions become more specialized and self-reliant, there has been an

increased emphasis on the need to not collaborate (Hansen). Moreover, as institutional processes and procedures become more complex, coupled with the increased focus on accreditation standards and state and federal regulations, institutional divisions have become more immersed in their own accountability and responsibility. Divisions no longer have the need to dedicate themselves to positively contributing to the daily operations of other divisions of the college (Buyarski, 2004).

Without a common, agreed upon definition of collaboration, many organizations may have false beliefs regarding the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of their professional partnerships (Hansen, 2009). True partnerships that foster student success and student achievement are often overshadowed by power struggles between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. Delineation of each other's roles has become increasingly blurred as processes and procedures within each area continue to change. Collaboration among any organization is a process that takes time, dedication, trust, and an inherent understanding of the responsibilities among each department. Subsequently, cultivating a culture of collaboration that fosters positive working relationships in the right manner is inherently more important than institutional leaders simply stating that collaboration exists among their respective divisions (Santiago-Vargas, 2010).

Throughout the past decade, the role of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs has become more differentiated (Bruneel, D'Este, & Salter, 2010). The historical separation of the traditional curriculum and the role of the co-curriculum continues to cause discourse among faculty and student affairs professionals throughout the academy (Bruneel, et al.).

### Models of Institutional Collaboration

Institutional collaboration is proven effective when divisions decrease their isolated activities and broaden inclusivity from each respective area (Aviles & State University of New York, Buffalo College at Buffalo Social Work Department, 2000). Successful collaborative efforts between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs has proven to be the result of strong administrative support, forming a common vocabulary between each division, as well as achieving a majority consensus for the integration of college -wide initiatives (Frost et al., 2010). Valencia College in Florida and West Shore Community College in Michigan, have re-designed the traditional faculty role of classroom instruction by including responsibilities that were traditionally completed by Student Affairs professionals into their job description (Roggow, 2014). This model of collaboration integrates faculty members into the advising role during peak-enrollment times throughout the year. Similarly, advisors and counselors are required to teach courses.

Through this process of integrating functionality, unity of purpose and continuity of effort is achieved throughout the institution. The benefits of linking the formal and informal curriculum have indicated that the overall institutional culture is positively influenced, which results in increased focus on student success (Frost et al., 2010). Although practices within higher education have routinely reiterated the importance of collaboration between departments, there is an increased body of evidence supporting the notion that collaboration may no longer be needed (Hansen, 2009). There are increased perceptions that suggest that the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs departments have become so specialized, that collaboration is no longer effective (Hansen).

Furthermore, a commonly accepted and practiced definition of collaboration among these two respected institutional entities has not been collectively understood (Hansen, 2009). As institutional departments continually become more differentiated and specialized, the desire and need to collaborate has become less apparent among institutions of higher learning throughout the past decade (Hansen). As student success and student completion continues to be a prominent focus of colleges and universities throughout the country, educational leaders must form effective and collegial partnerships that focus on the aforementioned constructs. Conversely, when educational departments within the same institution operate in isolation, the institutional ethos and climatic culture may not flourish in the manner that elicits student satisfaction, and ultimately, student success (Magola, 2005). Research that describes the negative effect of non-collaboration is limited and has not been readily examined within the southern region of the United States.

As institutional leaders formulate their independent ideals pertaining to collaboration, it is suggested that no collaboration is more effective than bad collaboration (Hansen, 2009). However, without a consistent, well-acknowledged understanding of collaboration, leaders within Academic Affairs and Student Affairs routinely find themselves questioning how and when to collaborate on institutional issues (Pace et al., 2006). Obstacles to effective collaboration are numerous and include such variables as cultural values, historical practices, type of institution, geographical location, mission of the institution, philosophical and educational background of the Chief Academic Affairs and Student Affairs officers, as well as how the divisions are structured (Frost et al., 2010).

### Collaboration in the Academy

Throughout the past decade, literature and research regarding effective collaboration within the academy has primarily focused on private liberal arts institutions and four-year residential institutions (Kezar, 2003). Although there has been research conducted that examines the role or non-role of collaboration in institutions, there has not been definitive research pertaining to collaboration within state colleges in the southern United States. Additional research is needed to identify organizational factors that promote the development and sustainability of collaborations. This study focuses on collaboration within the aforementioned state colleges, formerly known as community colleges. Although it was traditionally a commonly accepted notion that collaboration was paramount to institutional success, the academic environment within state institutions is questioning the need and relevance to develop and sustain effective collaboration.

During the past decade, specialization and differentiation within Academic Affairs and Student Affairs has had a substantial impact on how these two divisions of the academy collaborate (Frost et al., 2010). Although continual evolution and improvement of the services provided by each entity has improved the educational process for students, the close partnerships that were once fostered are not as prominent (Frost et al.). Academia has reiterated the importance of blending the traditional curriculum with the co-curriculum for centuries (Ambrose et al., 2008). This integration of the co-curriculum and academic curriculum was instrumental in the holistic development of the student (McKee, 1993). Despite the importance leaders in academia placed on holistic education, disconnect and separation is readily prevalent within higher education. Challenges that have contributed to decreased partnerships and collaboration



include competition for limited institutional funding for each division, misconceptions and overlap of the role each respective division plays in the success of the student, as well as a myriad of other factors that research and literature must explore (Frost et al.).

Although there are a variety of reasons that obstacles exist in the development of successful collaborations, research has focused on the following: the historical separation of the role of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs; the perceived second-class status of Student Affairs staff from faculty; cultural differences in administration; and vastly different views and opinions pertaining to student learning (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001). As educators continually refine processes and procedures focused on student achievement, it is paramount that they strive to overcome the aforementioned barriers. Through transparent communication and determination, Student Affairs professionals and faculty must form a unity of understanding in regards to the mission, goals, and values shared by all members of their respective institution. Through collaborative efforts, the institution may be more prone to the development and implementation of services that focus on the harmonious delivery of education to their constituents (Bourassa & Kruger).

Successful partnerships between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs has resulted in increased student achievement throughout the country (Albers, 2006). The most common examples of collaborative initiatives that have focused on student success include first year experience programs, student life programs, experiential learning, service learning, supplemental instruction and learning communities (Frost et al., 2010). Research has also noted that institutions who formed these successful partnerships were often led by personnel who worked in Student Affairs and served as a faculty member (Frost et al.). This supports the notion that for

collaborations to be successful, a working knowledge of the intricacies associated with each division must be understood and commonly accepted by the practitioner who integrates the formal curriculum and co-curriculum (Burns, 1995).

Although it is commonly accepted within higher education that there is an inherent need to collaborate within the institution, definitive reasons and rationale supporting why collaboration is important is limited (Hawkins & Oblinger, 2005). Intrinsic and extrinsic factors exist that motivate leaders in these divisions to develop sustainable partnerships (Kezar, 2003). Internal factors consist of developing partnerships to solve challenging issues related to common interests as related to institutional goals. Incentives for these partnerships consist of widely accepted ideals such as the strength of pooling resources and leveraging diverse talents and perspectives (Amey, Eddy, & Campbell, 2010). Regardless of the factors that contribute to collaboration, successful partnerships can only be established if both entities have common goals (Kezar). External motivating factors for collaborative efforts stem from the need to demonstrate collaboration as a requirement from accreditation agencies as well as from funding opportunities from corporate entities. Policy makers also encourage collaboration as they believe that efficiency and effectiveness of the institution result from strong partnerships. State-funded institutions are under increased scrutiny regarding their utilization of financial resources as they are funded by taxpayer dollars. To maintain their funding, they are often challenged to increase the merging of resources that demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness (Roper, 2004).

According to Hord (1986):

a partnership may provide a competitive advantage to an institution because it can offer its constituents goods or services that were not possible without the partnership (p.24).

Benefits of a successful partnership can readily be observed throughout the institution as well as at the individual level. Faculty and staff who contribute to collaborative initiatives broaden their own personal development. Depending on the institution, it may be a requirement for faculty to earn tenure that they actively participate in collaborative projects within their institution (O'Banion, 1999).

Although research has primarily focused on the benefits of successful partnerships within higher education, there is limited understanding of the underlying costs associated with developing such working relationships (Roper, 2004). One of the most challenging aspects to developing sustaining partnerships is the time commitment required by the stakeholders involved in the project. The responsibilities and tasks associated with the daily job of faculty and staff may actually serve as a deterrent to their involvement in collaborative initiatives. Furthermore, if the project does not directly correlate to the established departmental goals, deans and supervisors may not readily approve the employees to take time away from the responsibilities in which they were hired to complete. Additionally, effective partnerships evolve over time. The time and energy needed to cultivate the partnership in a manner that produces institutional and student success may not be realistic for the faculty member. If the work completed by the partnership is not highly valued by all members of the academic community, the return on investment may not be worth the energy expended (Roper). The decision to collaborate is one that must be thoroughly examined prior to beginning the task.

Through strategic planning and close analysis of the values, goals, and parameters of the collaborative effort, the decision must be made through collective discussion among members of the institutional division. If the rationale for forming partnerships with members of another

division is not well articulated with the institutional mission and goals, positive collaboration may not be possible. Members of the academic community should only collaborate when it makes good sense to do so (Gajda & Kolib, 2007).

### Myths and Misconceptions of Collaboration

Although higher education has made vast improvements in student engagement, the ubiquitous nature of collaboration within higher education has continued to pervade the academy (Friend, 2000). Professionals within higher education often utilize collaboration as a term to ensure that they are working with others for the betterment of the institution and success of the student. However, in further examination of the role that collaboration plays within the community college, it has become evident that collaboration may be guided simply by popular belief, rather than from critical inquiry (Friend). Friend stated:

Virtually every treatise on inclusive practices, whether conceptual, anecdotal, qualitative, or quantitative, concludes that inclusion's success in large part relies on collaboration among staff members and that failures can typically be traced to shortcomings in the collaborative dimension of the services to students (p.131).

Although Friend's belief is theoretically sound, attention to the inherent disservice to students because of ineffective institutional partnerships has been limited within the community college sector.

Albeit that the topic of professional collaboration has been studied since the early 1900's, and considering how frequent the practice of "collaborating" is mentioned, higher education has demonstrated very little progression in the acceptance of a comprehensive model that demonstrates effective collaboration (Friend, 2000). The simple statement that educators make pertaining to "collaboration" is used indiscriminately throughout higher education (Bennis, & Biederman, 1997). Educators, parents, and students have become immersed in the over-

utilization of the word “collaboration.” As a result, it has assumed a different definition than was originally intended. Merely stating the word collaboration has fostered the false belief from colleagues, faculty, educators, students, and parents, that due to the mention of collaboration, everything is working as it should. Due to the over-utilization of “collaboration,” the actual action of carrying out the collaborative activity has been compromised (Bennis, & Biederman).

According to Sullivan (1998):

Collaboration requires commitment on the part of each individual to a shared goal, demands careful attention to communication skills, and obliges participants to maintain parity throughout their interactions. Sullivan’s reiteration of the work involved with the creation and maintenance of successful collaborations supports the idea that simply the mention of collaboration is highly different than actually performing a collaborative initiative (p.22).

Although there are many examples of formal collaboration within higher education, the simple action of referring to every shared effort as effective collaboration decreases the inherent value of the concept (Friend, 2000). One of the contributing factors to decreased effective collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs is thought to be the false beliefs and expectations of those employed in these divisions (Friend). The commonality of referencing collaborative efforts within the community college is also due to the historical belief that more collaboration produces better results (Friend). Hansen (2009) shared in Friend’s philosophical underpinnings of the societal misconception of having more is better. In terms of collaboration within the community college setting, effective, worthwhile, meaningful, and well-articulated partnerships that produce student achievement and improved institutional culture should take precedence.

An additional misconception regarding collaboration within the community college setting pertains to the humanistic desire to feel appreciated and liked within the occupational

workplace (Arcelus, 2008). Although effective collaboration that produces student success can elicit these positive emotions, it should not serve as the primary impetus for collaborative efforts. Collaboration by default serves as the primary mechanism where professionals work in commonality to ensure that the student's education is delivered in the most efficient and effective manner (Friend, 2000). Subsequently, many educators have fallen victim to the underlying notion that collaboration is something that is easy to achieve (Arcelus).

Development of successful partnerships that are sustainable is an art form that takes energy, time, and an inherent desire to fully comprehend the information from the others' perspective. Commonly accepted perceptions and clearly articulated goals of the collaborative effort must be agreed upon prior to the partnership ensuing. Educator programs that teach professionals how to teach as a faculty member and how to work in Student Affairs settings typically do not include a class on how to collaborate. Without a formalized curriculum that teaches effective collaboration, coupled with the over-utilization of the word, professionals in higher education tend to assume that collaboration is a naturally occurring phenomenon that does not need to be cultivated (Friend, 2000).

### Collaboration and Student Success

Collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs has been a topic of continued interest and research since the 1937 publication of "*The Student Personnel Point of View*" (Dale & Drake, 2005). Since this publication, research has focused on the characteristics that define effective partnerships within higher education (Dale & Drake). With the increased emphasis on student achievement during the past decade, much of the literature has focused on the specific collaborative attributes that produce positive student learning outcomes (Dale &

Drake). The primary goal of higher education is to foster the learning and critical thinking skills that positively influence the continued evolution of society (Sutherland-Smith, 2013). With this goal in mind, educators must continually refine their partnerships to ensure that the students achieve their personal academic goals.

Although the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions have complementary roles, the belief throughout the community college environment is that the Student Affairs division supports the learning that occurs within the division of Academic Affairs (Dale & Drake, 2005). However, many Student Affairs departments within the community college system have developed and implemented robust co-curricular components that educate students on a myriad of topics, in an effort to help students become more successful within the classroom. Despite creative efforts to integrate the co-curriculum and formal curriculum, students still experience a gap in the integration of the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions (Dale & Drake). As each respective division continually becomes more specialized and differentiated, this gap continues to widen according to a focus group that was conducted with students enrolled in the Maricopa Community College system located in Phoenix, Arizona (Dale & Drake). In this study, students were surveyed on items pertaining to significant factors that contribute to their success and achievement (Dale & Drake). Results of this research investigation concluded that students firmly believe that the sharing of information between students, faculty and student affairs personnel, enhance their learning. Additional results also indicated the importance of integration of the students' career and educational goals with the information learned in the classroom setting (Dale & Drake).

Terry O'Banion dedicated his life to the continued improvement and integration of educational resources that promote life-long learning within the community college setting (Dale & Drake, 2005). O'Banion's work supports the study conducted at Maricopa Community College as he reiterates the misconceptions related to the belief that faculty can educate the student holistically. In his research, O'Banion (1999) concludes that effective partnerships between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs is the primary ingredient needed in the holistic development of students enrolled at community colleges throughout the country (Dale & Drake). Emphasis on effective partnerships and collaborative initiatives has taken precedence over the simple notion of collaboration. Research over the past decade has indicated that student learning is the responsibility of everyone involved within the campus community (Colwell, 2006). In an ideal collegiate environment, the entire college should accept responsibility for student achievement (Colwell).

Increased emphasis on creating learning-centered environments that foster student success gained momentum in the 1990s (O'Banion, 1999). This learning-centered movement focused on the implementation of creative methodologies that elicit student achievement. Due to the learning-centered movement, student affairs practitioners began to formulate partnerships with the faculty through classroom presentations, co-taught lessons, as well as through the continued development of co-curricular programming (Dale & Drake, 2005). The power of combining the learning that happens within the classroom with student affairs initiatives has gained momentum within the community college setting since the learning-centered movement of the 1990s (Dale & Drake).



Effective partnerships in practice can be readily observed in programs such as the First Year Experience, Early Intervention, Learning Communities, Service Learning initiatives, Academic Bridge Programs, and pro-active initiatives in the Academic Advising area (Dale & Drake, 2005). The aforementioned integrated programs demonstrated significant success at community colleges such as Maricopa Community College and Valencia College (Dale & Drake). Valencia College witnessed a 14 percent increase in semester-to-semester retention rates once these innovative programs were implemented college-wide (Dale & Drake). Similarly, Middlesex Community College located in Massachusetts observed a 5 percent increase in course completion rates through the early intervention collaborative efforts between faculty and student affairs professionals (Dale & Drake).

#### Bridging the Gap between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs

As institutions continually refine processes that foster student learning and student success, they continually struggle to find the optimum level of institutional collaboration that achieves these goals (Cook & Lewis, 2007). The development of effective partnerships is an ongoing and continual process that evolves over time. Schroeder (1999) identified common events within the community college that serve as “trigger” mechanisms to build collaborative endeavors. These events serve as the building blocks for long-lasting partnerships. Often, these working partnerships are successful as the leaders in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs developed a shared vision with measureable outcomes (Schroeder). Additionally, institutional leaders must create the culture that inherently believes collaboration is a shared responsibility by all members of the organization (Schroeder).

According to Schroeder (1999), Student Affairs professionals can engage in sustainable, meaningful partnerships with their faculty colleagues through the implementation and adherence to the following protocols: Define partnerships as a core value; focus on collaboration in professional development programs; ground partnerships in real institutional problems and opportunities; leverage the assessment movement; modify organizational structures to facilitate collaboration; and realign budget allocations that support collaboration. Although the aforementioned protocols appear to be the recipe for effective institutional collaboration, most community colleges have a challenge building the institutional trust that is required to implement these standards. Through the continual building of institutional trust as well as through the refinement and assessment of initiatives that foster partnerships, the level of institutional collaboration will continue to evolve.

#### Collaboration in the Community College

According to Keeling (2004), community colleges provide educational opportunities for approximately 40 percent of all students enrolled in institutions of higher education. The benefits of enrolling in an open-access institution include smaller class sizes, individualized attention, decreased cost, as well as the expansive range of educational certificates and degrees that can be earned in the community college setting (Kellogg, 1999). In an effort to ensure the continued success of the diverse needs of students enrolling in community colleges, it is imperative that the Division of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs collaborate (Keeling). Through collaborative partnerships, students are able to experience the total immersion that should foster the blending of the traditional curriculum and co-curriculum (Keeling). This merging of the curriculum supports the holistic development of students, which is a critical

component for students to be competitive in the global workforce (Colwell, 2006). Keeling stated in *Learning Reconsidered*:

Learning is a complex, holistic, multi-centric activity that occurs throughout and across the college experience (p.6).

The aforementioned statement as reiterated by Keeling (2004) supports the level of learning that can transpire when integrative efforts that support learning inside and outside of the classroom occur. Community colleges serve to provide transformative educational opportunities through the alignment of student learning outcomes as related to the mission of the college (Cook & Lewis, 2007). The need to create effective student learning outcomes that are aligned with Academic Affairs and Student Affairs is a requirement of most accreditation bodies (Keeling). According to Keeling, it is the close alignment of these student learning outcomes that creates a more learning-centered institution comprised of healthy, vibrant partnerships. Through the synergy that is developed in the alignment of college-wide goals, the institutional culture is able to positively contribute to the students' experiences and perception of the academic environment. Students are more likely to persist in their educational endeavors if their experiences meet or exceed their expectations (Kittle, 2010). The creation of campus environments that are student-centered and are simple to navigate from the student perspective, are imperative to fostering a campus climate that produces positive results (Kittle). Because of the open-access mission of community colleges, they serve the educational needs of a myriad of diversities including those students who are considered non-traditional (Keeling).

A nontraditional student is defined as one who is financially independent, attends part time, works full time, delays enrollment after high school, has dependents, is a single parent, or does not have a high school diploma (Boswell & Wilson, 2004, p.29).

### Creating Effective Partnerships

Educational institutions and corporate entities possess a strong belief that their organization will be more successful through collaborative practices (Hansen, 2009). Although collaborative partnerships may produce effective synergies that lead to productive outcomes, the result of collaborative practices that are dysfunctional may actually waste time, money, and organizational resources (Hansen). The perils related to ineffective and bad collaboration is a disease affecting even the most successful companies throughout the world (Hansen). Hansen theorizes that bad collaboration has a worse effect on the organization than no collaboration. However, in examination of collaborative practices between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, one of the primary challenges that institutional leaders face is the ability to differentiate between good collaboration and bad collaboration. Although there is a myriad of factors that may lead an institution to its own analysis of the success or non-success of collaborative efforts, a collective agreed-upon definition of “good” and “bad” collaboration is highly varied (Kellogg, 1999).

The current research on factors that can be identified to determine the success of collaborative initiatives indicates that there is not one distinct factor responsible for creating successful departmental collaborations (Czajkowski, 2006). Institutions must effectively align a variety of factors to ensure effectiveness in the collaborative endeavor (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992). Mattessich and Monsey defined six categories that are to be used as a framework for measuring successful inter-institutional collaboration in higher education. The six collaboration factor categories identified by Mattessich and Monsey include: trust and partner compatibility; common and unique purpose; shared governance and joint decision making; clear understanding

of roles and responsibilities; open and frequent communication; and adequate financial and human resources.

In addition, Gray (1989) developed a framework that identified three distinct stages of collaborative interactions within higher education. These stages were identified as the precondition stage, process stage, and the outcomes stage (Gray). The precondition stage is identified as the time when leaders come together to begin and outline their partnership. During the process stage, the partners clearly identify the distinct roles and responsibilities and create effective methods for transparent and open communications. The outcomes stage is clearly identified as the time when the expected outcomes are assessed and measured (Gray). Colleges that have adopted and implemented Gray's three stage collaborative model, include Maricopa Community College and Valencia College (Gray). These institutions have indicated that their adherence to this model has had a positive institutional impact on their ability to build cohesive teams that are dynamic and collaborative (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992).

#### Collaborative Leadership

A common practice within community colleges throughout the United States has been to create the impression that they are a very dynamic, ever-changing, and responsive organization that exudes a high level of successful partnerships (Sanaghan & Gabriel, 2011). These partnerships and collaborative relationships relate to their internal constituents as well as with their external constituents. However, there is a growing disconnect that has emerged on community college campuses pertaining to the common overuse of the term "collaboration" (Sanaghan & Gabriel). Collaboration is a common mantra carelessly used by institutional practitioners within the community college (Sanaghan & Gabriel). Utilization of collaboration

has become an over-simplified term that has lost the original premise of the meaning throughout higher education (Wahl, Kleinbard, Reilly, & Jobs for the Future, 2012).

Leaders within higher education often experience the misuse of collaboration throughout their daily work including when interviewing prospective employees, and to the presentations at board of trustees' meetings (Sanaghan & Aronson, 2009). The increased use of collaboration has led to decreased authenticity in the practical application of the ideas, concepts, and initiatives in which the term was originally meant to describe (Sanaghan & Gabriel, 2011). Traditionally, the connotation of "collaboration" within higher education alluded to comprehensive partnerships, collegiality, the building of community, and the notion that departments were working together for the betterment of the collegiate environment (Aviles & State University of New York, Buffalo College at Buffalo Social Work Department, 2000). Currently, over-utilization of the term "collaboration" within the community college system has contributed to the actual diminution of collaborative initiatives and partnerships. Institutional leaders, who have false beliefs regarding the degree of actual collaborative initiatives occurring within their college, may have a negative effect on the completion of college-wide initiatives (Aviles & State University of New York, Buffalo College at Buffalo Social Work Department).

Leaders who are effective in developing and maintaining effective collaborative partnerships have embraced a keen understanding and application of authentic collaboration (Sanaghan & Gabriel, 2011). Genuine and authentic collaborative efforts between institutional departments can be identified by the manner, style, application, and assessment of the initiative (Sanaghan & Gabriel). Authentic collaboration within the community college is difficult to

develop and sustain without transparent and trusted practices from all institutional departments.

Sanaghan and Gabriel developed a working definition of collaboration as follows:

Collaboration involves a transparent and trusted communication process where all parties feel informed and can provide feedback and ideas to others with whom they work. Most importantly, collaboration involves shared decision making, where the decision rules are understood by everyone and all parties can inform or influence important decisions that can potentially impact them, especially resource allocation decisions (p.115).

The perspective of effective collaboration as reiterated by Sanaghan and Gabriel delineates the challenges associated with practicing authentic collaboration. Due to the complexity of the higher educational environment, authentic and effective collaboration continues to elude many institutional leaders.

As community colleges implement developmental programs that seek to ameliorate the pervasive challenges associated with budgetary deficits, enrollment uncertainties, student retention and completion rates, it is essential that college leaders foster trust and transparency throughout the organization (Czajkowski, 2006). Community colleges such as Maricopa, Valencia, and the Texas Community College system have demonstrated effective collaborative practice through the utilization of results oriented partnerships (Martin, Murphy, & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2000). Rather than developing task forces that involve members from Academic Affairs and Student Affairs for the sake of inclusion, the aforementioned institutions created a culture that allowed participants to actually be engaged in the collaborative initiative.

In an effort to overcome the numerous challenges that plague most community colleges throughout the country, leaders must develop collective and coherent input from Academic Affairs and Student Affairs leaders in a consistent and respected manner (Czajkowski, 2006).

Traditional approaches to solving complex organizational challenges have surpassed the common practice of addressing the issues through isolated departments that operate in disconnected modalities (Sanaghan & Gabriel, 2011). According to Leavitt and McKeown (2013), one of the main problems in institutionalizing effective collaborative practices is that collaboration by human nature is a relationship-based paradigm that fosters partnerships with people with whom we find pleasure working with. For organizations to practice authentic collaboration, they must reach beyond their traditional comfort zone and implement creative opportunities that lead to cross-boundary idea sharing that elicits productive action (Leavitt & McKeown).

According to Altbach et al. (2005), most of the challenges faced by leaders within higher education relate to the adaptive changes needed throughout the academy. Adaptive changes relate to the ability for educational leaders to swiftly implement a collective and collaborative approach to solving problems through the engagement of multiple stakeholders throughout the college (Altbach et al.). Commonly agreed upon ideals that will continue to plague community colleges for the next decade include the increasing pace of change, ambiguity and complexity of processes will continue to escalate, and the need to develop institutional resilience to competing demands (Altbach et al.).

To overcome these challenges, it is essential for leaders in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to develop an advanced level of skillsets that produce effective partnerships (Sanaghan & Gabriel, 2011). According to Sanaghan and Gabriel, leaders within higher education will need to practice collaborative leadership. Although the core leadership qualities of character, integrity, and competence are essential for effective leaders, they will also need to transfer knowledge across institutional boundaries, create a sense of authentic community, solve complex issues with



the input from others, and possess a keen understanding of the power of effective collaborative practices (Sanaghan & Gabriel).

According to Hansen (2009):

The collaborative leader has the capacity to subordinate his or her own goals to the larger goals of the institution (p.69)

Hansen's statement supports the need for collaborative leaders to put the interest of their organization and the interests of their collaborative initiative first (Hansen). As the complexity and specialization of each department within academia continues to grow, leaders must be able to identify conflicts associated with personal interests and those of the organization. In addition, collaborative leaders seek common ground between people who have vastly different goals and agendas (Hansen). Additional time and energy devoted to building cohesiveness between members of the group who possess differing opinions is essential for an effective functioning group (Evans, 2009). Although differing opinions are needed in the effective functioning of any group, empowering people to be able to differentiate between their personal goals and interests, from the overall goals of the group is essential in building cohesive unity (Gulley & Mullendore, 2014).

An essential characteristic of effective collaborative leaders is their ability to practice inclusive decision making among all members of the coalition (Hansen, 2009). Research has indicated that professionals who lead through autocratic ideology do not build cohesiveness among team members (Ibarra & Hansen, 2011). Leading from a dictatorial standpoint decreases the proper functioning of the group, decreases team morale, and directly correlates with the failure of the initiative (Ibarra & Hansen). Characteristics of a leader that fosters group support include his or her openness to people, openness to new ideas, and openness to civil debate

between and among members of the group (Ibarra & Hansen). The most experienced and talented leaders are challenged routinely with personal barriers that block their ability to display collaborative leadership techniques (Ibarra & Hansen). These personal barriers as identified by Hansen include the following: (a) internal power struggles, (b) arrogance, (c) defensiveness, (d) fear, and (d) ego. These personal barriers must be recognized and appropriately dealt with in an effort to ensure group inclusiveness, cohesion, support, and proper group functioning (Ibarra & Hansen).

### Summary

The community college system is uniquely American (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007). The dynamic and innovative methodologies that foster student engagement and student success have had a profound positive impact on the continued evolution of the higher educational system. Although the current research and literature regarding effective collaborative practices that improve the overall effectiveness of the community college system are highly varied, the theoretical underpinnings that make collaboration effective have been identified as follows: (a) institutional culture, history and campus ethos, (b) trust and respect among all participants, (c) strong leadership, (d) mutually agreed upon outcomes, (e) common purpose, (f) effective communication, and (g) resources. As divisions within the higher educational system become more complex and specialized, the effort, time, and willingness of colleagues to formulate effective collaborative partnerships continues to elude the academy (Hansen, 2009)

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine the current status of collaboration from the perspective of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs at representative institutions located in the southern region of the United States.

### Examination of Perception in Qualitative Research

This study identified the current perceptions of collaboration through the lens of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs at state colleges located in the southern United States. This research was conducted to identify factors that contribute to successful partnerships as well as to identify institutional and cultural barriers that may contribute to negative collaborations. Collaboration between educational institutions and external entities have been well established through business partnerships and articulation agreements (Archer, Chetty, & Prinsloo, 2014). Preliminary research conducted by The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning in 2014, indicated that external partnerships tend to be stronger than the internal partnerships developed between academic departments (Archer et al.).

Prior to formally answering the first research question, it is important that the notion of “perception” is thoroughly understood. Although the notion of “perception” is one that is commonly misunderstood by quantitative researchers, perception is firmly grounded in psychology and philosophical disciplines (Cresswell, 2003). In addition, the notion of exploring one’s current perception is deeply rooted in historical studies within the academy (Cresswell).

The primary purpose of utilizing perception in this study is that it helps guide practitioners in the current understanding of collaboration, through the lens of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs. In addition, qualitative studies seek to examine and explore the notion that there are multiple realities with multiple meanings. Qualitative research is referred to as a naturalistic paradigm that assumes that multiple realities exist pertaining to a specific topic (Guba, 1981). Furthermore, a naturalistic paradigm supports the notion that hypotheses are used to identify and examine what is identified in the study (Guba). A variety of theoretical constructs can be developed through the examination of these multiple realities. The process of generating results through studying one's perception improves the knowledge of members of the academy as well as allows researchers to expound upon the results of this study. Furthermore, how one views the world is highly variable. This variability of differing perceptions can be compared to classic works of art. Each person has the unique ability to formulate their own understanding and interpretation of the same work of art. Similarly, one's perception of the world in which they work and interact is highly dependent on their personal historical experiences, upbringing and educational attainment.

Prior to formally answering the first research question and upon further analysis, I believe that this question should have worded to include the notion of "formulate" collaborations in lieu of "perceive" collaboration. Although the term "perception" is commonly utilized in qualitative dissertation research, the information acquired through the research process, warrants further inquiry on the manner in which these collaborative partnerships are formulated as one's perception is highly variable. Through the utilization of manual data reduction, coupled with the themes developed through *NVivo* qualitative analysis, the first research question can now be

answered. There was a total of twelve research questions that directly related to research question number one (Appendix E).

### Grounded Theory

According to Corbin & Strauss (2008), utilization of grounded theoretical methodology requires the researcher to refrain from formulating ideas of the results of the study prior to the study commencing. The results that would be generated from this study were completely ambiguous prior to and during the data gathering process. It was not until I fully matured with the content of the transcripts when I began to unravel the ambiguous nature of the complexity of collaborative engagements in higher education. The primary premise of grounded theoretical methodology is to examine and expose the current status of a particular condition in effort to develop a new, current model that demonstrates the information obtained (Corbin & Strauss). Grounded theory is commonly utilized in qualitative research as the circumstances in which are under scrutiny are dynamic in nature and not static. It is this changing environment that is under investigation as it is the goal of the researcher using grounded theory to identify if the data obtained from the personal interviews, is congruent or different than the previous hypothesized model (Corbin & Strauss).

A grounded theoretical methodology was chosen for this study, as the primary goal was to examine if the voices of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs reflect the theoretical model identified by Hansen. My visualization of Hansen's model of collaboration was depicted in Figure 2 on page 11. Through the utilization of a grounded theoretical methodology, data was collected that fostered the development of a new, current model of collaborative practices between the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), the primary purpose of grounded theory is to allow the researcher to examine and interpret the personal responses of the participants in the study. In addition, grounded theory allows the researcher to explain the current status of the subject under research, through the participants' responses (Goulding, 2002). In 2014, Gibson and Hartman expounded upon the research conducted by Glaser and Strauss as they thoroughly examined the benefits of conducting qualitative research based on grounded methodological constructs (Gibson & Hartman, 2014).

According to Gibson and Hartman, the primary reason for the development of grounded theory was to correct the gap between theoretical and empirical research. Since the development of grounded theory, it has become one of the most commonly utilized approaches in qualitative research methodology (Gibson & Hartman, 2014). This method was chosen for this study, as it is my goal to facilitate explanation of behaviors as indicated by the participants' responses. This fostered my ability to develop and demonstrate a new model of collaboration that may support, refute, or negate the theoretical model as interpreted by Hansen.

A primary characteristic of grounded theory methodology is that it allows the researcher a great deal of autonomy and openness in the interpretation of the data (Gibson & Hartman, 2014). Through grounded theory, researchers are able to transcend the limitations imposed by the traditional, well-known theorists and develop their own theory based on the personal interactions of the participants (Gibson & Hartman). Grounded theory differs from phenomenology as it seeks to specifically identify what is occurring in the area under examination (Gibson & Hartman). The primary tenants of grounded theory are to discover how the social world is organized within the area under investigation and to develop a conceptual model that illustrates

these social phenomena (Gibson & Hartman). In addition, grounded theory is an approach for developing a theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). This research study seeks to closely examine the perspectives and voices of the participants, in an effort to gain a current understanding of collaboration.

As indicated in the research questions previously identified, I conducted this study on the perceptions of collaboration through the lens of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs. Qualitative research entails the utilization of personal interviews in an effort to develop and reiterate emergent themes from the responses of the participants (Cresswell, 2003). Identification of thematic underpinnings through the close examination of the data gathered and the application of Grounded Theory lead me to develop this new framework that properly identifies the current status of collaboration between the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions at public colleges located in the southern region of the United States.

#### Research Design and Rationale

The primary intent of this study was to identify themes, commonalities, and incongruences in the perception, understanding, and application of collaboration between the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions. A qualitative research design was chosen for this study because it was the researcher's intent to examine the current practice of collaboration between the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions at open-access, state colleges located in the southern United States. According to Creswell (2003), qualitative approaches are utilized when examining social and cultural interactions with others. Additionally, a qualitative approach is utilized when the researcher attempts to uncover and delineate new information regarding an individual or group dynamic (Creswell). Furthermore, qualitative methodology was used in this

study as the research utilized a grounded theoretical methodology. A quantitative methodology is not applicable in this study, as this study did not seek to quantify collaboration, but rather to determine the current status of collaboration.

A qualitative research investigation is appropriate for this study as it explored and delineated trends associated with how the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions formulate and perceive collaborative partnerships. This study explored the perceptions of collaboration between the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions through the lens of the leader of each division. The overall intent of this study was to search for meaningful understandings of the current experiences through the lens of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs in respect to collaborative engagements. Qualitative research methodology is the best way to develop a comprehensive understanding of the current perceptions of collaboration between these divisions.

#### Interview Protocol

The specific research that was conducted, utilized open-ended questions, administered through personal interviews (Appendix E). According to Creswell (2003), the personal interview approach creates a non-threatening environment and assists the volunteer participants with the ability to respond to the questions in an open, transparent manner. In addition, another benefit of conducting personal interviews is that it allows the researcher to potentially obtain a substantial amount of robust information and analysis of the subject being researched (Creswell). According to Marshall and Rossman (1995), one limiting factor of the personal interview process is that the participants may be unwilling to fully disclose information in a transparent, truthful, and honest manner. This limitation was overcome through the ability of the researcher to provide an



environment and rapport that supports the participants' comfort and openness to honestly answer the questions posed.

This study utilized personal interviews with four Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and four Vice Presidents of Student Affairs Officers at four institutions. The interview sessions were scheduled for one hour and they were conducted face-to-face at the college in which each participant was employed. Qualitative interview questions and interview protocols were developed that addressed the current perception of collaboration between the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions at each of the participating institutions. Open-ended questions comprised the format for the interview sessions. It is important to note that it was not required to have the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs participate from each institution.

The interview sessions were recorded and transcribed by a research professional. The recorded transcriptions were interpreted by the researcher in partnership with the Institutional Research and Effectiveness Department at the institution in which I am employed, in concert with the researcher's major professor. A comprehensive analysis of themes, commonalities, and incongruences were generated through the utilization of *Nvivo 10 for Windows*. The data were coded to ensure inter-codal reliability.

The primary instrument utilized in this study was interview questions created by the researcher. Since the questions were open-ended in nature, it allowed for the thorough analysis of the current perception of collaboration through the lens of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs at each of the participating institutions. According to Creswell (2003), open-ended questions foster the in-depth responses needed for a qualitative

study to be respected. Appropriate interview protocol was followed which includes the process of full disclosure, informed consent, as well as the clear identification of the topic under investigation.

### Site/Context

The site of this study was at four public state colleges located in a state geographically located in the southern region of the United States. Individuals who voluntarily participated in the study are members of a consortium of institutions that are collectively referred to as the Southern Region Consortium (SRC). SRC is a pseudonym created by me as the researcher to protect the anonymity of the participating institutions. Each institution that participated in this study is governed by a local board of trustees appointed by the governor. Each institution that participated in this study is considered an open-access, public state college geographically located in the southern region of the United States. To protect the anonymity of the colleges participating in this study, the official names of the participating institutions are masked and replaced with pseudonyms. These pseudonyms are identified in Table 2. Due to logistics and costs involved with conducting research throughout the country, this study was solely conducted in one state. Each institution participating in this study is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Each volunteer participant currently holds the official title of Vice President of Academic Affairs Officer or Vice President of Student Affairs.

### Population and Setting

The population utilized for this research study was the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs at each of the four institutions that chose to participate. The individuals who participated in this qualitative study are also referred to as the

Chief Academic and Chief Student Affairs Officers. The titles *Vice President of Academic Affairs* and *Vice President of Student Affairs* are commonly used interchangeably with *Chief Academic Officers* and *Chief Student Affairs Officers*.

There were four participants from Student Affairs and four participants from Academic Affairs for a total of eight participants. Although the requirements and job descriptions of the participants may differ at each participating institution, the commonalities and similarities in their responsibilities are similar. To earn the position of Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs, individuals must have vast experience in their discipline with progressive leadership experience. In addition, they are required to have a robust background and history of work experiences that culminate in each of them earning the position as the Chief Academic Affairs and Chief Student Affairs professional within their respective institution. The individuals utilized in this study are not identified to protect confidentiality, autonomy of responses, as well as to ensure validity of the interview responses.

#### Participant Recruitment and Selection

The population utilized for this study was the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs who are employed in their role at one of the institutions utilized in this study. As there were four colleges participating in this study, purposive sampling data were utilized. In qualitative studies, small samples of people are strategically examined (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). Therefore, four people who currently serve as the Chief Academic Officer and four people who serve as the Chief Student Affairs Officer were the participants in this research study.

Participants in this study were contacted through e-mail to participate in this study. Participants were volunteers and had the option to participate or not participate in the personal interviews. Dillman, Smyth, and Christian's (2009) method to creating effective research studies was followed through the implementation of the communication methods described by Dillman et al. (2009). Participants were selected based on their current title and role within the institution. It was not required for both Academic and Student Affairs Officers to participate from the same institution. If the Academic Affairs Officer chose to participate from an institution but the Student Affairs Officer chose to not participate from the same institution, the Academic Affairs Officer was still eligible to participate.

I contacted the participants in this study via e-mail prior to the implementation of the study. This preliminary e-mail was sent to (a) welcome their participation in this study, (b) communicate the importance of their volunteer participation, (c) inform them of their volunteering status and confidential nature of this study, and (d) ask for their participation and assistance with this research. A copy of this email invitation is located in Appendix A. The e-mail was sent through open-access, public e-mail lists. The e-mail address list contains all Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Vice Presidents of Student Affairs professionals in the region of interest. The participants were considered volunteers for this study and they had the right to refuse their willful participation in this study.

#### Confidentiality

To preserve the primary research standards associated with any research study, reliability, validity, and autonomy, was closely protected during the course of this study. The name of the college used, as well as the names of the participants, are masked throughout the course of the

study. Pseudonyms masked the names of the individuals participating. The participating institutions are identified as follows: State College 1; State College 2; State College 3; State College 4. Volunteer participants are identified as follows: VPAA 1; VPAA 2; VPAA 3; VPAA 4; VPSA 1; VPSA 2; VPSA 3; VPSA 4. Table 2 is a visual representation ensuring anonymity of the participating institutions and the participants.

*Table 2: Visual representation ensuring anonymity of the participating institutions and the participants*

| <b>INSTITUTION</b> | <b>VICE PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS</b> | <b>VICE PRESIDENT OF STUDENT AFFAIRS</b> |
|--------------------|---|--|
| State College 1    | VPAA 1 Amy                                | VPSA 1 John                              |
| State College 2    | VPAA 2 Jill                               | VPSA 2 Karen                             |
| State College 3    | VPAA 3 Nick                               | VPSA 3 Andrew                            |
| State College 4    | VPAA 4 Tom                                | VPSA 4 Dani                              |

In this research study, I respected the anonymity of the participants as well as the anonymity of the volunteer participating institutions. Although the results are being shared with the participants, the study utilizes inter-codal reliability. Inter-codal reliability ensures that each participant's responses are coded in a manner that does not expose the participants or the participant's institution to negative consequences associated with their transparent and honest feedback regarding collaboration at their institution. Through the assurance of anonymity, I am able to collect data in a non-threatening environment. Furthermore, validity and reliability of the results are ensured due to the process of Dillman et al.'s (2009) being utilized. Allowing the participants to feel at ease regarding the survey is critical to the effective collection of the data to be examined (Creswell, 2003).

Furthermore, specific names of the individual participants are not used in an attempt to ensure that responses to the interview questions cannot be attributed to a specific person or institution. Participants were not asked to identify their institutions. This information is important to the researcher to ensure that there is a variety of participation throughout this study as well as to identify any regional variances that may influence the results.

### Validity and Verification

According to Creswell (2003), researchers must properly convey the steps in their study to check for the credibility and accuracy of their data. Validity of any research study is paramount to being considered worthy of professional review (Dillman et al., 2009).

With any qualitative study, it is essential that the primary constructs of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability be practiced throughout the research process (Creswell, 2003). Shenton (2004) stated that the issue of credibility should be addressed by creating an audit trail. This process entails that the investigator is demonstrating an accurate picture of the phenomenon being studied. Credibility was addressed in this study through implementation of Shenton's previously mentioned process. Transferability is concerned with the ability for the results to be generalizable across multiple institutions (Shenton). This concern was addressed through the selection of participants from multiple institutions. According to Shenton, the issue of dependability was addressed through the intricate and robust descriptions of the participants' responses. Specifically, Shenton states that the researcher must provide detailed field notes and exact replication of the participants' responses. This was addressed through the recording and professional transcription of the personal interviews. Similarly, the issue of confirmability was addressed through the detailed description of the steps that take place in this

research process. Confirmability relates to the ability of another researcher to replicate the study through the same methodology utilized in this study (Creswell).

To address the aforementioned constructs, this study implemented the following mechanisms: (a) Volunteer participants were selected from four different institutions. This modality addresses the transferability and generalizability of the study. (b) The interview transcriptions of the personal interviews with the participants were sent to them to validate the accuracy of the transcription. According to Miles et al. (2014), this improves the quality and accuracy of the study through the process referred to as “member checking.” (c) Through the utilization of detailed and robust interview protocol, coupled with recorded transcriptions of the participants’ responses, dependability and confirmability was assured. (d) Credibility of any qualitative study entails the need for external audits and peer review of the process utilized in the study (Shenton, 2004). The peer review process in this study was completed through the sharing of the results with peers and the researcher’s major professor. Peer debriefing also assists with the validation of the results obtained (Creswell, 2003).

In addition to the aforementioned steps that were utilized to ensure this study is credible, triangulation occurred through the critical examination of the interview transcripts. According to Miles et al. (2014), triangulation requires a minimum of three independent sources that reach consensus of the results being examined. In social science research, triangulation is utilized as a validation strategy and is used to review the results from at least two sources that differ (Miles et al.).

Furthermore, in simplest forms, triangulation refers to reviewing the results of the study through a variety of lenses and with multiple perspectives (Miles et al., 2014). This study

implemented the core facets of triangulation through the differing viewpoints and application of audit trail procedures. According to Creswell (2003), qualitative research entails the development of coherent emergent themes, through the convergence of a variety of sources. Through the analysis of transcriptions, emergent themes were identified and reviewed by the participants in the study as well as through the researcher's major professor. *NVivo* 10 software is recommended by qualitative researchers as it fosters the complex analysis of data, which allows the researcher to identify and categorize themes (NVivo, n.d.). *NVivo* 10 software was utilized in this study.

#### External Audit

The first source of thematic review took place with a colleague of mine who has recently completed his doctorate degree. He reviewed the nodes generated and validated the themes that were identified by *NVivo* software. Specifically, he conducted an analysis of the responses to each research question in accordance with reviewing anonymized transcripts of the interviews. It was his goal to ensure that the information generated from this study, was similar with the three themes that I generated. An example of some of the themes developed through *NVivo* is located in Appendix H.

In addition to the review by my colleague, a thorough analysis was conducted by my dissertation chair. Dr. Cintrón was provided the transcripts of each of the eight personal interviews. A formal meeting was conducted with Dr. Cintrón and myself to review my findings, which were consistent in nature to her review. The congruency that emerged in our findings allowed for this study to be considered applicable to gaining useful insight on the manner in which the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs collaborate. The peer scrutiny



process is recognized as a valuable tool that adds credibility to qualitative studies (Shenton, 2004).

### Data Collection and Instrumentation

The data collection process involved an established set of steps that were implemented and adhered to. These steps are outlined in Table 3. Data were collected and analyzed through the recording and transcription of each of the interviews. The interviews were professionally recorded, transcribed, analyzed through *NVivo* 10 software and documented appropriately. In addition, the researcher’s field notes were also to be included in the data analysis.

*Table 3: Data Collection Process through the Use of Personal Interviews*

| <b>TASKS</b>  |
|---|
| 1. Identify participants/institutions for the study through e-mail invitation.  |
| 2. Confirm their volunteer participation through e-mail and personal phone contact.                                       |
| 3. Mask the name of the participants and the institutions through coding.   |
| 4. Participants completed the informed consent process.   |
| 5. Personal interviews were scheduled.  |
| 6. Personal interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed with the researcher’s field notes.                       |
| 7. The researcher’s major professor examines the data and identify themes pertaining to the two research questions posed. |

*Table 4: Research Questions and Theoretical Framework Mapped to Interview Protocol*

| <b>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b>   | <b>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK PRINCIPLES</b>  | <b>INTERVIEW PROTOCOL</b>                                |
|---|--|--|
| RQ1: How do the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at public state colleges located in the southern United States, perceive their collaboration with each other? | Barriers to collaboration: hostile work environment, over-collaborating, time, cost, simplification of effective collaboration, specialization of disciplines, recognizing when to collaborate and when not to collaborate, identification of barriers to effective collaboration, insular culture, transfer barrier, self-reliance, fear, unwillingness to collaborate. | #1, #3, # 4, # 6, # 7, # 8, # 15, # 16, # 18, # 19, # 20 |
| RQ2: How do the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at public state college located in the southern United States construct collaborations?                       | Strategies related to successful collaboration: unification of people, cultivation of a T-shaped Management Model, building nimble networks, grow to be a collaborative leader.  | # 1, #2, # 5, #9, #10, # 11 #12, # 13, # 14, # 17, # 20  |

## Data Analysis

Utilization of text analysis from the open-ended interview questions group generated themes, commonalities, trends, and incongruences in responses. *NVivo* 10 software is recommended by qualitative researchers as it fosters the complex analysis of data, which allows the researcher to identify and categorize themes (NVivo, n.d.). The data examined were grouped thematically.

Data analysis was conducted to identify themes as well as areas of incongruence among the following areas: (a) responses from all Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs; (b) responses from all Vice Presidents of Student Affairs; (c) paired responses from each institution. The steps that were taken in the data analysis process are identified in Table 5. This study utilizes grounded theory methodology. Therefore, the data generated were guided by the principles developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Through the application of grounded theory methodology, I was able to develop and propose a current model of collaboration between the Academic Affairs and Students Affairs divisions within state institutions located in the southern United States.

*Table 5: Data Analysis Process*

| <b>IDENTIFICATION OF THE STEPS ASSOCIATED WITH DATA ANALYSIS</b>  |
|---|
| 1. Personal interviews with the participants were recorded and transcribed by a professional transcriptionist.                            |
| 2. Transcriptions were manually reviewed by the researcher and major professor.   |
| 3. Field notes and memos were also evaluated and included in the data.  |
| 4. Emergent themes were generated through inter-codal reliability of <i>NVivo</i> 10.   |
| 5. <i>NVivo</i> 10 software for windows was utilized and auto-coded for the entry of the personal interviews.                             |
| 6. The pseudonyms were paired with the actual institutions and participants. This information will remain confidential.                   |
| 7. Data were categorized and identified in chart and written summary.   |
| 8. Emergent themes generated from the manual review and from the <i>NVivo</i> 10 software were analyzed and identified by the researcher. |

### Authorization to Conduct the Study

The University of Central Florida requires Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval prior to any study on human subjects. Upon defense of the proposal, and per the approval of the dissertation chair and committee, the human research protocol was submitted to the University of Central Florida's Institutional Review Board (IRB). IRB approval was granted through the University of Central Florida (Appendix B).

### Ethical Consideration

Respecting autonomy and protecting the participant's confidentiality was practiced throughout the research process. Each volunteer participant completed the informed consent process prior to the personal interviews being conducted. The informed consent form was reviewed with each participant. Participants were asked to acknowledge through signature that they understand that their participation is voluntary and that their identity and the school in which they represent will be masked throughout the process. Their personal names and the name of their college were coded with pseudonyms before, during, and upon the conclusion of this research study.

The information and data obtained during the research study was kept on the researcher's personal laptop. This laptop is password protected and encrypted with up-to date protection technology. The data obtained from this study was secured for one year and then destroyed through electronic deletion and shredding of all hard-copy documents and manuscripts.

### Originality Score

My major professor submitted this document to iThenticate, a plagiarism software used by the University of Central Florida. The results were shared and supported by the dissertation committee.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of collaboration between the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at representative colleges. Qualitative research methodology was utilized, coupled with a grounded theory approach. It was my goal as the researcher to interact with the participants on a personal level through individual interviews. These interviews allowed me to gather information first-hand to examine the present role of collaboration between the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions. Through the analysis of data obtained and through thematic synthesis of the emerging trends, the current status of collaboration was identified.

## **CHAPTER 4: VOICES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANTS**

### Introduction

This chapter closely examines the collegiate settings in which the eight personal interviews took place along with their profiles. The impetus of this study was spawned from the need to explore and closely examine the current status of collaboration between the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs in state colleges located in the southern region of the United States. Specifically, the dynamic nature and changing paradigm of higher education, coupled with the intricacies of each division, has resulted in dramatic shifts in the manner in which these two divisions work together. The aforementioned statement regarding the changes taking place within the academy are a result of personal experiences and colleague statements.

The initial contact of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs took place through an e-mail invitation to voluntarily participate in this qualitative study (Appendix A). This first contact was preceded by an informal invitation, which was verbally discussed with them at the most recent council meeting held in June of 2016. As discussed in the methodology section, the participants were chosen through an open-access database and their official title. Each participant met the criteria as they currently served as the Vice President of Academic Affairs or Vice President of Student Affairs at a public, state college located in the southern region of the United States. The first e-mail contact was sent to a total of twenty people comprised of ten Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and ten Vice Presidents of Student Affairs. Within five days of sending the initial e-mail invitation, there was a total of eight representative volunteers from four institutions. As my goal to interview eight participants was accomplished, the interviews were scheduled with each of their respective administrative assistants. To

accommodate the participants in this study, each personal interview was conducted on their respective campus in accordance to their schedule.

### Demographic Overview of Participants

There were a total of eight participants. Three of these participants are Caucasian females, three are Caucasian males, one participant was a Black female, and the final participant is a Hispanic male. The ages of these participants varied, but they were all between the ages of forty and seventy years. While there was no common career pathway identified that led each of them to their role as the Vice President from their respective division, the overall diversity and demographic blend of the participants was satisfactory for the purpose of this study. Each participant had earned a doctorate degree in higher education or related field. Table 6 identifies the research study participant demographic summary.

*Table 6: Research Study Participant Demographics*

| <b>PARTICIPANT #</b> | <b>PSEUDONYM</b> | <b>INSTITUTION</b> | <b>GENDER</b> | <b>DIVISION</b> | <b>ETHNICITY</b> |
|----------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1                    | Amy              | SC #1              | F             | AA              | W                |
| 2                    | John             | SC # 1             | M             | SA              | H                |
| 3                    | Jill             | SC # 2             | F             | AA              | W                |
| 4                    | Karen            | SC # 2             | F             | SA              | W                |
| 5                    | Nick             | SC # 3             | M             | AA              | W                |
| 6                    | Andrew           | SC # 3             | M             | SA              | W                |
| 7                    | Tom              | SC # 4             | M             | AA              | W                |
| 8                    | Dani             | SC # 4             | F             | SA              | B                |

\*M = male, F = female, W=White, B=Black, H=Hispanic, SC = State College, AA=Academic Affairs Division, SA= Student Affairs Division

### Collegiate Settings

Each interview was scheduled for one hour and took place in their personal offices. Each institution was located in the southern region of the United States and were open-access, state colleges that serve a diverse group of students. Each college offers a wide array of academic

degrees and certifications including two-year degrees and four-year degrees. The institutions are all accredited by the same accreditation agency and produce graduates that transfer into the state university system, or transition directly into their profession. It is important to mention that two participating institutions in this study have been recognized for their excellence in higher education. Additionally, each participating institution in this study is a multi-campus comprehensive educational institution that serves the diverse needs of their local community. The student population at each institution is highly varied and each institution serves between fifteen thousand students and sixty thousand students each year.

#### State College 1

When I arrived at State College 1, I was immediately impressed with the lush foliage that serves as a welcoming invitation to all students, faculty, staff and members of the community. The professionalism and academic ethos transcended through the manner in which the academic village was easily navigated. I made my way through a maze of old buildings that appeared to be archaic when compared to the newer buildings that eclipsed the older architecture of the 1960s era. I arrived at the Vice President of Student Affairs office suite and was warmly greeted by the administrative assistant. Immediately upon entering the Vice President's office, my senses were overloaded with the continual ringing of multiple telephones coupled with the e-mail notifications alerts on the computer in multiple succession. In addition, there was a small line forming outside of the office composed of faculty and staff with a palpable urgency. This experience is representative of the multiple, competing demands that are placed on the office of the Vice President on a daily basis. John assured me that although there were

numerous other items to tend to, he looked forward to speaking with me regarding collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.

### John

John is a Hispanic male who was born and raised in Bogota, Columbia. He immigrated to the United States upon completing high school with the goal of earning a college education. His ultimate goal reflects the traditional American Dream as he sought a better life for him and his family than what he experienced growing up on the streets of Columbia. John was very open, transparent, and conveyed a sense of comfort through his smile, optimistic and positive participation in this interview process. Although the majority of his employment history entailed leadership positions in business and industry, he has accepted the role of duality as the Interim Vice President of Student Affairs, and Vice President of Informational Technology and Institutional Resources. Prior to the formal recording of the interview, John shared a robust background of the importance of developing strong partnerships between internal and external constituents. Once I reviewed with him the primary premise of this qualitative research study, he was eager to share his experiences with collaboration both past and present. Due to the rigorous demands associated with John's current position, he began the interview by ensuring that we would remain on time as he had another important meeting to attend to immediately following our interview. I assured him that I respect his time and will strictly adhere to the agreed upon time frame of one hour.

Although John has worked in higher education for twenty-eight years, he has only recently assumed the role as Interim Vice President of Student Affairs. His extensive



experience in leading teams and managing large-scale projects that focus on continual organizational improvement is testament to his ability to developing partnerships that produce results. John explained, “The past three years as Interim Vice President of Student Affairs, we have made significant changes to our relationship with the rest of the college and what we do for our students” (John, lines 29-30, p.1). “The most important part of our work with Academic Affairs is what we can do together” (John, lines 35-36, p.1). Although relatively new to his current role, John’s statements reiterate his perception of the importance of building and sustaining effective partnerships for the betterment of the student. John continued to provide robust answers to the interview protocol and continued to discuss the focus on relationships. “If that relationship doesn’t exist, that’s a complete failure” (John, line 56, p.1). With a divine interest in the student experience, John indicated the importance of not treating a student simply like a number or a transaction. “A student is not a transaction” (John, line 57, p.2). John continued to state the importance of each division not being able to serve the needs of the student in isolation and that “It has to be a tight collaboration” (John, line 61, p.2).

When asked about the factors that lead to successful collaborative practices, John said, “one of the first ones is relationships, from the top down” (John, lines 64-65, p.2). He continued by stating: “If Student Affairs and Academic Affairs do not collaborate, then the whole thing falls apart from that point” (John, line 65, p.2). “So relationships between us and them is probably the most important” (John, lines 70-71, p.2). John’s passion for building effective partnerships was observed through his voice variations as well as in his physical demeanors describing the perils that an institution can suffer if

collaboration is not effective between the two divisions. “If you have an environment in which the Academics and the Student Affairs don’t collaborate, then what we’re going to do is, is go at each other. And the one who suffers is students. If you are not gonna be able to talk to each other; if you’re not gonna have that relationship that we talked about, then this is gonna fail. You have to have a cohesive environment in which we can feel comfortable to say this is not working, we need to fix it and how to fix it as opposed to this is not working because you’re not doing your part, or we’re not doing our part. Once you eliminate the pointing of fingers, once you eliminate all those personal feelings, and you get into what is best for our students, it’s like anything else; it’s a team effort. So, not having a team collaboration mindset will hurt you” (John, lines 78-86, p.2).

When asked his definition of “bad collaboration,” John stated, “that bad collaboration is one where Academics and Student Affairs do not plan things together. Each one goes it its own direction. Each one thinks that their area is of expertise overrides the other. It’s one where if there is an issue, neither one of them talk” (John, lines 186-189, p.5). An interesting perspective that John made regarding the changing dynamic of collaboration is “to me, I think is very important is mutual respect. If the two parties don’t respect each other, then everything falls apart because they don’t trust you. Trust can only be built by competency, and by caring about what you do. If you care about what you do, if you know that you’re good at what you do, if you know that this is your passion, and you are competent about it, people are gonna trust you” (John, lines 200-204, p.5). Thus far in the interview protocol, John highlighted the importance of cultivating relationships, sustaining relationships, and building trust as the formula to

successful collaborative practices between the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.

Although John indicated a strong allegiance to the notion that leadership, respect, and trust serve as the main ingredients to effective collaborations, he did allude to the challenges associated with the sustainability of those relationships. “The sustaining is the part where it’s harder actually because once you start, it sounds easier to get it going, but to keep it going at that pace is a lot of effort” (John, lines 246-247, p.5). When asked how collaboration is fostered, encouraged, and supported, John stated, “it is again going back to the leadership between the two divisions” (John, line 253, p.5). John continued, “once you set that environment, the rest of the people are gonna follow. It’s not that complicated but at the same time, it’s very complicated to get there because you gotta build that trust” (John, lines 253-260, p.5). John’s perception of effective collaborative engagements indicates that leadership and trust, coupled with open communication are the most important facets. “Open communication is one that I think is important. The other part is transparency” (John, lines 265-266, p.5).

Furthermore, when asked how institutional culture influences collaboration, John stated, “it influences tremendously” (John, line 321, p.6). “So that culture, being able to do what you want to do at your own time and your accord, influence our ability to collaborate because a lot of things that we have to deal with in Student Affairs, impact their ability to teach one way or the other” (John, lines 330-332, p.6). As far as John explaining the manner in which collaboration is assessed and measured, he said, “I think we don’t measure collaboration exactly, per se’. We don’t have a matrix that points out if

we collaborate well or not, but what we do is we have a plan and we can turn around and see how well we did” (John, lines 344-346, p.7). John’s statement reiterates that the assessment of collaborative engagement is an informal process rather than a formal, standardized metric for determining the efficacy of collaborative partnerships.

As indicated by the official transcription of the personal interview with John, he provided a thorough analysis of his perception of collaboration with multiple statements pertaining to trust and building partnerships. John stated, “I don’t think there is such a thing as over collaborating. I would disagree with that. I’ve never heard anybody tell me; I don’t think you should talk to me” (John, lines 387-388, p.7). Additionally, “outside of that, everything else that is here, that is described here, I think is right on the money. In terms of issues that make you a good collaborator, I agree with that 100%” (John, lines 390-391, p.7).

### Amy

Amy is a white female who has dedicated her professional career to higher education. Specifically, she has served as a leader in college education in community colleges for the past twenty years. With experience as a professor, English Department Chair, administrator, and leader of the esteemed faculty institute, she continually strives to build pathways that lead to student success and achievement. Amy’s doctoral degree was earned in the same program in which I am enrolled. Thus, she was extremely welcoming, supportive, and interested in contributing to this research study. Amy can be characterized as a true educational professional as her demeanor, vocabulary, and dedication to student achievement could be witnessed through the casual exchange of

greetings prior to the interview beginning. Amy greeted me earlier than our scheduled appointment with a large smile on her face, which encouraged a safe and welcoming atmosphere. Her office was full of accolades that her department earned and the physical layout fostered a very comfortable environment. Upon review of the informed consent and the background of this study, we promptly began the formal interview process.

According to Amy, “my definition of collaboration is that you are working toward a common goal. That you are supporting each other in reaching those goals rather than obstructing each other in obtaining individual goals. So I would say, it’s working together toward a common goal, whatever it takes to make that happen” (Amy, lines 41-44, p.1). Successful collaborative practices according to Amy include “frequent communication, frequent discussion, common respect, and that it is important that we respect what each other is trying to accomplish as we go towards that common goal” (Amy, lines 46-51, p.1). In a similar fashion, Amy stated that her understanding of meaningful collaboration “begins with respect for what each other is doing and it’s a genuine, ah working together. It’s just a genuine, support of each other working towards a common goal based on respect” (Amy, lines 66-71, p.2). She approached the question regarding her definition of “bad collaboration” is, “saying you’re working together, but behind their backs, talking negatively about the other division” She indicated that “it has a lot of it starts with the two Vice Presidents and their relationship and their respect for each other. I think it starts there and that sets the tone for how the two teams should be working together” (Amy, lines 91-93, p.2). Amy also indicated that “it’s not going to work unless you have leaders that believe in collaborative work as opposed to

competitive, kinds of work. Furthermore, “I think leadership is really important in this and that it all goes back to the culture of the institution and I think the success of the institution is huge” (Amy, lines 97-100, p.2).

When asked the process utilized to determine if collaboration should occur or not occur, she indicated, “I don’t think we have a process for that. We are just sort of winging it” (Amy, lines 116-117, p.3). Amy continued to mentally explore instances of collaboration that she could recall when a decision had to be made to decipher whether collaboration should occur or not occur and she was reluctant to recall a specific instance of this happening. When we moved on the next question regarding how collaboration is fostered, encouraged, and supported, she responded by saying “there are times when academic excellence takes priority for us over certain requests” (Amy, line 142, p.3). This statement reflects the focus on academic achievement and the need to ensure student success not only for the well-being of society, but also in respect to the increased emphasis on state funding as dependent upon completion rates. While briefly touching on academic excellence and faculty’s focus on teaching, we transcended into the next question pertaining to how the complexity and specificity of each division impacts collaboration. Amy responded, “I think it sets up barriers” (Amy, line 147, p.3). Her focus from this question transitioned to the responsibilities of the faculty members in accordance to their contracts and syllabi with their students.

I asked Amy what process she uses to cultivate collaboration and she responded by saying, “it’s important to focus on the goal, encourage student success, encourage retention, encourage completion” (Amy, lines 157-161, page 2). Additionally, when

asked how institutional culture influences collaboration, she said, “it has everything to do with collaboration, it’s about culture and respect and whether the institution values collaboration” (Amy, lines 167-169, p.4). Amy’s response to the question regarding how one’s leadership style impact’s collaboration, she said, “I think it has a really important role in encouraging collaboration particularly between divisions” (Amy, lines 199-200, p.4).

### State College 2

The second state college that participated in this study has the connotation of State College 2. This was the largest of the four participating institutions in this study as well as one of the colleges that operates a multi-campus service district. From the four colleges in this study, state college number 2 demonstrated a high-level of interest in participating as determined by their immediate response to my meeting request letter located in Appendix A. Although the interviews with the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs from state college number 2 took place on different days, I was elated to learn of their individual interest in collaboration. The interviews took place at a centralized district office, which is the location of each of the participant’s respective offices. Upon arriving at the district office, I was warmly greeted by personnel that ensured I knew the specific location of the person with whom I had an appointment. Service excellence was provided through a personal escort to the office where I was introduced to the administrative assistant. The administrative assistant served as the important catalyst in scheduling these important interviews. I ensured that I demonstrated the highest level of respect for them through a kind gesture of handing

them each a personalized thank you card. One thank you card was for them and the other hand written card was for the participant.

State College 2 is truly unique in the manner in which the entire culture of the institution embraces and sustains effective partnerships. The aforementioned statement is supported by the fact that this institution has developed and built a specific building referred to as the “*Collaborative Design Center*.” The physical structure of this large, modern, building consists of deliberate and dedicated areas specifically tailored to foster collaboration. The college utilizes this building in a variety of ways including strategic planning, budgeting, as well as a host of other meetings and events that require the open exchange of diverse perspectives. I had the unique opportunity of speaking with the college president in this building and he specifically referred to the building as the “*think tank of the college*.” Additionally, the college president reiterated the importance of bringing people together in a “safe” place that encourages colleagues to develop convergent ideas.

### Jill

The first interview at State College 2 was conducted with Jill. Jill has served as the Vice President of Academic Affairs for four years at her current institution and is well known throughout higher education for her creative and ingenious methodologies that cultivate student engagement. Jill’s experience entails various academic leadership positions at a large State University located in the Southwest United States as well as state/community college experience. Jill was extremely interested in participating in this study and demonstrated this willingness by her warm, generous welcome and greeting. Jill’s enthusiasm to discuss collaboration was palpable. Prior to beginning the interview, I was somewhat nervous to meet with Jill. This



nervousness was predicated by her prestige and vast experience in Academic Affairs. Once the interview protocol and the informed consent was reviewed, I felt confident and appreciative of her valuable time.

Jill responded to the first question pertaining to her understanding and definition of collaboration with enthusiasm. She said, “decisions are best made when you’ve got all the information and you can’t have all the information unless you’ve assembled all of the stakeholders” (Jill, lines 37-39, p.1). She continued stating, “collaboration has to be deliberate. We don’t show up and just talk and call that collaboration; there has to be how we are gonna interact” (Jill lines 39-40 p.1). Jill continued by expressing the importance of putting students first and to practice skillful discussion making that is supported through collaborative design principles. “Collaboration to me is not a process and it’s not every time you get together in a room and make decisions together it’s not necessarily collaborative cause it doesn’t have that deliberate focus on we want the best decision using our best minds and hearts” (Jill, lines 49-52, p.2). Similarly, when asked about the factors that lead to successful collaborative practices, she stated, “well in some ways, the deliberation I think, the having it be intentional is really important” (Jill, lines 54-55, p.2).

As the interview progressed, I could tell by her positive demeanor and robust interest in the questions posed that she was enjoying this experience. She responded to the question pertaining to meaningful collaboration by saying “it’s meaningful when you’ve really invited the right people into the room and you’re really willing to listen to them. You’re really willing to be influenced. It’s not meaningful if you’re trying to manipulate people into do what you want, into doing what you what them to do” (Jill,

lines 95-98, p.2). “So, to be meaningful, it has to come at the right point as well as in the design maybe not in the implementation” (Jill, line 109, p.3). Jill continued by providing numerous examples of collaborations that are routine in nature and referenced the “team for student preparedness, a team for training deans to evaluate online course, a team for course design with really broad input” (Jill, lines 128-132, p.3).

As an educated and trained social psychologist, Jill has vast experience in human dynamics and environmental psychology. Her background in the aforementioned sciences was ripe for her answer to the question posed regarding the factors that contribute to the changing dynamic of collaboration. She stated, “probably about twenty years ago there was emphasis on self-managed work teams and team building and I thought it was awesome because I became a social psychologist and I do cooperative learning and I loved all that stuff, but it was done so badly. I was embarrassed by some of the things that got done” (Jill, lines 168-172, p.4). Jill shared that “the most important thing is that you have to be committed to it. You have to be you; you can’t do half-assed collaboration. It’s like, if you are gonna do it, learn to do it right, invest the time in training people to do it, reflect on it” (Jill, lines 186-190, p.4). Jill spoke of the manner in which the environment shapes the culture of collaboration with a direct relation to the personalities within the department. “It is was a collaborative environment, it was because of the personalities and the desires of the people in that department” (Jill, lines 208-209, p.5).

At state college number 2, concerted efforts are being made to improve and sustain collaborative engagements. “A lot of the collaboration is through our formal

governance process and we have a retreat every summer and we start the year with a retreat” (Jill, lines 238-240, p.5). When I inquired about the manner in which the specificity and complexity of each division impacts collaboration she stated “it’s like me and the Vice President of Student Affairs are joined at the hip, we are together all the time, we do stuff together, we call each other, we text each other” (Jill, lines 267-270, p.6). It is important to note that the physical proximity of the Vice President’s office is adjoining to the other Vice President’s office at this institution.

Jill replied to the question pertaining to how institutional culture influences collaboration by saying “it’s your institutional culture either is collaborative or it isn’t. I mean, I don’t see it as um, oh were in a culture where we can collaborate. It’s we are a collaborative culture. And that’s just different, just a different animal” (Jill, lines 290-292, p.6). In her response, she indicated that this is just the way it is. Furthermore, the manner in which she responded supported the notion that it is a collaborative culture or it simply isn’t and that there is no room for variance on this.

#### Karen

The second interview at State College 2 was conducted with Karen, the Vice President of Student Affairs. Similar to my experience in the Vice President of Academic Affairs interview from this same college, Karen demonstrated a high-level of professionalism and enthusiasm to participate. Karen’s vast experience in higher education entails primarily working in the Student Affairs division at the same institution for the past twenty years. Karen is well established in the field of higher education due to her vast publications on student engagement, student services, as well as in her positive partnerships that she has developed with

prominent leaders throughout the county. Karen's creative methodologies and student-centered principles have been followed and implemented at numerous institutions throughout the United States. Her passion for student success can be observed in the manner in which she demonstrates a positive outlook for the continued improvement of higher education.

The interview began in similar fashion to the previously held interviews in effort to maintain consistency with the information conveyed by the participant. It is essential in any research study for the researcher to be cognizant of their actions, as they cannot influence the responses provided. Karen responded to the first question regarding her understanding and definition of collaboration by stating, "we're fortunate to work at a place where we've been practicing collaboration for quite a few years and so I've been through that process or that cultural change I'd say at the college" (Karen, lines 22-24, p.1). Continuing, Karen said, "we used to be more of an authoritarian, follow more of an authoritarian structure. Almost twenty years ago, we started talking about collaboration as a model and what did that look like and so I've been in different levels of authority, so I've kind of seen that from different viewpoints" (Karen, lines 24-28, p.1). Furthermore, Karen responded to the question regarding the factors that contribute to successful collaborative practices by saying "when you talk about shared goals, it's like, how do you really, um feel as passionate for the others' goals as you do for your own goals" (Karen, lines 34-35, p.1). Karen's deep analysis of the first question continued when she stated, "you have to have to understand what they care about. You have to understand why they care about it. You have to understand why it's important. So, I think it's really going deeper and that's where you get to the shared understanding. Cause sometimes, I mean even in a deeply collaborative culture, such as I work in now, and lots of people with lots of years of

practice at it, in the heat of the moment, you can say something and somebody else says something and then you realize, I think we are talking about two different things” (Karen, lines 37-42, p.1).

Similar to previous interviews, Karen accentuated the importance of time in respect to forming collaborative partnerships. “You have to take the time. Let’s now go through a more deliberate process to make sure that we understand each other” (Karen, lines 42-27, p.1). “I think it starts with a willingness of the leaders or the persons involved to see the value in it” stated Karen when prompted about the factors that impact successful collaborative engagements (Karen, lines 49-50, p.1). Karen added, “to get to the differences between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, there definitely are cultures operating within those professions, but that’s what I think you have to be patient and have some methodologies. Very defined methodologies of how to reach common purpose and goals and that’s where it all starts” (Karen, lines 61-65, p.2). Karen also stated, “a phrase we use is where we’re playing in each other’s sandbox. So I think there is an understanding of that and we find it helpful to have these kinds of phrases that help people understand what’s going on when feelings emerge that feel icky” (Karen, lines 76-78, p.2). Additionally, she reiterated the importance of recognizing the most important aspect of “what are we trying to accomplish together for the student” (Karen, lines 80-82, p.2). Similar to the statement regarding playing in each other’s sandbox, a similar phrase that is practiced at this institution is “design thinking.” “Design thinking, really sitting down and talking about design principles before you do anything” (Karen, lines 108-109, p.2).

One of the many salient items that Karen discussed in her interview pertain to the notion of “deliberateness.” “To be very deliberate; and I’m not gonna compromise the collaborative

process; let's follow our deliberate process, create the space for that to happen; and to be deliberate about that," (Karen, lines 134, 136, 141, p.3). Karen's definition of bad collaboration entails the notion "that's when collaboration doesn't happen actually. I think it's when people make unilateral decisions. I think it hurts the most is when people decisions and put something into place that affects stakeholders that they didn't anticipate that it affected them" (Karen, 168-171, p.4).

When openly discussing collaboration, Karen said, "it takes a lot of energy and it takes time and those two things feel like limited resources lots of time. You have to take into account the human factor" (Karen, lines 197-200, p.4). She continued by stating, "it takes a great deal of human capital to do it, maturity, and willingness (Karen, line 201, p.4). When asked to openly discuss the current role collaboration plays at the institution in which she is employed, she smiled and said, "it is definitely one of our working theories. It is foundational to the way we prefer to work. We're in ongoing conversations about when to really invest in the full collaboration (Karen, lines 229-232, p.5). According to Karen, much of the collaborative spirit is ingrained during the onboarding process. "I think a lot of our professional development is when people are onboarded, particularly into leadership positions. Having an understanding of what collaboration is and coaching" (Karen, lines 252-254, p.5). She continued expressing the importance of incorporating collaboration into the onboarding process by saying "we have programs that open the world to folks. That's when they start learning about collaboration as well, so we are very deliberate about teaching it" (Karen, lines 268-270, p.5). As the interview progressed, Karen provided her most robust analysis of collaboration when asked how she fosters effective and successful relationships. She began with a long pause and then responded

by saying, “get to know people, understand their work, understand what they care about, understand their history, and then formulate that personal connection (Karen, lines 282-284, p.6). The aforementioned statements support Karen’s importance on embracing the human element in order to formulate effective partnerships.

“The cardinal sin is to be claimed that you weren’t collaborative” (Karen, line 334, p.6). This powerful statement supports the notion that collaboration is ingrained throughout the culture of her institution. In terms of how Karen’s institution measures and assesses collaboration, she stated, “I wouldn’t say we have a formal mechanism for doing that except through our governance process” (Karen, lines 383-384, p.7). She continued by speaking of how the informal process of determining if collaboration is effective is commonplace. When Our formal interview concluded with Karen closing by stating “but I do think that the idea of collaboration is really in some ways sector dependent and the dynamics of it would be much different in a research one university where silos is really the way they operate most of the time” (Karen, lines 524-526, p.10). Although the goal of this research study is not to delineate differences in the manner of collaboration at state institutions as compared to research one institutions, it is recommended that future research on collaboration explore this interesting notion.

### State College 3

The third college that participated in this study is referred to as “*State College 3.*” Although this was the smallest institution participating in this study, this multi-campus college serves a large, rural, geographical area. The approximate number of students served by this institution each year is thirteen thousand. Both interviews with Nick and

Andrew were scheduled on the same day and held immediately after one another. Similar to the previous institutions, this college was established in the same decade as the other participating institutions. Thus, the combination of old architecture and new architecture, coupled with the lush foliage, created a very welcoming environment. I found this college extremely easy to navigate as the campus environment was academically oriented. Student pictures that touted their success transcended from the parking lot through the buildings in which I traversed. Furthermore, I was greeted by college representative who ensured that I was well versed on the location of my destination.

### Nick

Nick's professional demeanor and promptness to participate in this interview was demonstrated through his cordial greetings. His smile and physical appearance was one of professionalism as he was interested in the goals of this research study. Similar to other Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs, Nick's time is extremely precious as this interview was actually scheduled during the traditional lunch time hour. Nick's passion and dedication to student success could be seen by the open and transparent manner in which he encourages students to stop by his office. Although Nick's professional career was primarily in the Academic Affairs division, he has served as the Vice President of Academic Affairs at state college number 3 for five years. Simply stated, Nick reiterated, "collaboration is working together, plain and simple" (Nick, line 13, p.1). He continued by responding to the question pertaining to the factors that lead to successful collaborative practices by saying "a willingness to listen, having an open mindset, not having predetermined direction or decision on any particular subject" (Nick, lines 20-21, p.1). According to Nick, "my team will tell you that we are highly collaborative. We



come to the table and talk about a wide array of issues, pros and cons and will come to a team decision” (Nick, lines 23-24, p.1). The team dynamic was witnessed upon my arrival to his office as the office dynamics and positive spirit demonstrated by members of his team, was palpable. Meaningful collaboration according to Nick entails “the fact that you’re open to looking at everything, all 360 degrees of an issue and that you’re not necessarily predetermined to go in any one direction” (Nick, lines 28-30, p.1). In regards to bad collaboration, Nick said, “bad collaboration to me would really just be a veil, where you’ve really got a predetermined idea of what you want to do and you’re just going through the motions for the motion’s sake” (Nick, lines 40-41, p.1). Guided by the notion that collaboration takes dedication on behalf of all participants, Nick also reiterated the importance of having “self-integrity to be open to other viewpoints” (Nick, line 44, p.1).

Although Nick’s responses were abbreviated when compared to the previously held interviews, as the meeting progressed, I became keenly aware that there were many other items that were pre-occupying his mind. This realization is demonstrative of the common challenge that leaders in higher education have multiple, competing demands that they must address in an expedited manner. Nick’s responses to the interview questions reiterated the importance of participants having the “willingness to have an open mindset and to be able to look at every angle of an issue” (Nick, lines 65-66, p.2). “Open communication, working together on a regular basis, and leaving turfdom at the door, and knowing that we trust each other” are process that Nick uses to cultivate collaboration (Nick, lines 80-81, p.2). Furthermore, Nick indicated that collaboration is measured “indirectly, it’s measured through our strategic initiatives are and what our overall effectiveness is. So even though it may not be a direct measure of collaboration, I

think the degree to which we are willing to collaborate and mutually solve problems affects the outcomes for our measures” (Nick, lines 89-92, p.2). Nick describes his leadership style as collaborative and said that institutional culture is affected “from the top down” (Nick, lines 85, 95 p.2).

### Andrew

Andrew has extensive experience in a variety of roles within the Student Affairs division at various colleges. He has served as the Vice President of Student Affairs at institution number 3 for almost three years. His tenacity and dedication to student success could be detected in the manner in which he positively conveyed care and compassion for student achievement. We began the interview promptly on time as my meeting was scheduled between two other appointments. The nervousness that existed in the previous interviews subsided due to Andrew’s unique ability to convey a sense of comfort and unconditional support for this research study. Andrew responded to the first question pertaining to his definition and understanding of collaboration by saying “we care about students and their experience at our institution” (Andrew, line 15-16, p.1). He continued by saying “students experience the college moving in and out without thinking about where they are in the organization. So I think part of collaboration is realizing that the problems that our students have are problems with the institution as a whole and so we have to work together to provide a solution that doesn’t always fit into neat boxes” (Andrew, lines 17-22 p.1). Andrew said that overall, “collaboration is really working together to solve the problems and recurring problems that our students have with our institution” (Andrew, line 21-22 p.1). Andrews perspective on collaboration is that the institution is one, cohesive unit through the lens of the student. Additionally, he conveyed that the factors leading to successful

collaborative partnerships “absolutely has to be trust” (Andrew, line 24, p.1). Andrew stressed the importance of trust in formulating and sustaining collaborative engagements and reiterated the importance of leadership. “One of the big things that happens here that supports collaboration is that our President’s approach supports collaboration” (Andrew, lines 36-37, p.1). This statement supports the notion that a collaborative culture is developed from a top-down approach.

When I asked Andrew for his understanding of meaningful collaboration, he responded by saying, “being authentic and having real conversations with each other” (Andrew, lines 71-72, p.2). When I inquired as to his understanding of bad collaboration, he said “I think bad collaboration is kind of a mandate that you guys will play together without us getting our hands dirty, this is not your people and our people, this is us working together to solve a problem. So, I think bad collaboration is when leaders do not support it” (Andrew, lines 101-108, p.2). Andrew indicated the importance of effective leadership in sustaining collaborative relationships and the need to “cross some of those barriers for the betterment of the institution” (Andrew, line 127, p.3). Andrew’s perception is that the division is only as good as the institution as a whole and that “collaboration brings to the table group strengths” (Andrew, line 126, p.3). Additionally, Andrew indicated that the process to improve and sustain collaborative engagements is “informal and that is it based on the personalities of the folks involved” (Andrew, lines 160-161, p.3).

Andrew responded to the question pertaining to how institutional culture influences collaboration by saying “I see the collaboration is definitely in the culture. It’s very family like and it reflects the president’s leadership. The President leads, encourages us to not be too concerned with our own silos, and he approaches the governance of the college very

interdisciplinary” (Andrew, lines 222-226, p.5). “The President’s leadership style is very collaborative, very open and my leadership style is also one that’s that way” (Andrew, lines 238, 245, p.5). The aforementioned statements seem to convey a sense of synergy between the various leaders at the college with emphasis placed on the importance of the President “modeling collaboration for us” (Andrew, line 245, p.5).

#### State College 4

In similar fashion to state college 3, both of the interviews at state college 4 were scheduled for the same day at times that were successive. The Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs at this institution were very eager to participate in this study as they both indicated their overwhelming interest in the study, as well as the final outcome(s). Personal conversations were held with each Vice President at a conference that was held prior to the personal interviews being conducted. During these conversations, I learned of a truly unique way in which they cultivate, sustain, and embrace the notion of collaboration between these two divisions. Specifically, each year during the annual college-wide convocation event, the Vice Presidents of both divisions take an oath, similar to a mock-wedding, where they vow to support one another, formulate and sustain partnerships that foster student success, and work collaboratively for the continued betterment of the college community. The conversation continued and they shared that it is the culture of the institution that has been created by their president. In effort to capture their input in a manner that could be utilized for this study, I ended the conversation and encouraged them to respond to the participant request e-mail that will be sent.

## Tom

Tom is a seasoned professional in Academic Affairs with over nineteen years of progressive experience in various roles in higher education. His large office was decorated with numerous awards, accolades, and accomplishments that were overshadowed by large amounts of paper and additional clutter. The first impression of his office was one of disarray, but in closer examination, it was a visual representation of the numerous projects and college initiatives that are focused on student success. Although Tom expressed interest in meeting with me when we scheduled the meeting, his daily responsibilities took precedence and we began the interview later than expected. When Tom arrived at his office, his physical appearance demonstrated frustration, stress, and a general concern for a current issue that he was addressing prior to our interview. After a series of sincere apologies for beginning the interview late, followed by a few long, deep, breaths, he abruptly began to inform me of the reason why he was late for our meeting.

Tom has served as the Vice President of Academic Affairs for the past seven years with over nineteen years of progressive experience in Academic Affairs. His definition and understanding of collaboration is “collaboration is a fairly decentralized model for decision making. It means that I am gonna seek input prior to decisions being made from stakeholders” (Tom, lines 17-18, p.1). Immediately, Tom related the importance of one’s ability to “lead an institution through change is gonna be dependent upon the perceptions of openness to collaborate early on” (Tom, lines 27-28, p.1). He followed by saying that the factors that lead to successful collaborative practices include “transparency of

communication, honesty and integrity, soliciting a diversity of perspectives, preventing group think and promoting collaboration” (Tom, lines 30-35, p.1). At Tom’s institution, collaboration is “perceived as crucial both vertically and horizontally with a need to advocate for your own unit, your own department, but there’s also the recognition of the bigger picture that your unit is part of a larger division and that within Academic Affairs, the division has to honor the differences among the units but also hang together” (Tom, lines 43-51, p.1).

Tom shared examples of collaborative engagements at his institution which include “the assessment of student learning outcomes, assessment of the effectiveness of general education across divisions, as well as various shared governance initiatives” (Tom, lines 59-66, p.2). Tom’s response to the question regarding bad collaboration was “I think bad models for collaboration involve wheel spinning by which I mean conversations about options that continues on beyond the point where it’s useful. That’s not collaboration that moves toward anything” (Tom, lines 74-76, p.2). When asked about the changing dynamic of collaboration, Tom provided a robust answer stating, “I think collaboration begins at the top especially the vertical parts. I think there’s elements of culture as well. There are elements of culture that defy leadership. There are elements of culture and if the culture is collaborative, if there’s an organic kind of a collaborative element to the culture that values openness and transparency of communication, that even, a top down leader, a hierarchical leader may be forced into collaboration. But ideally, to change an organizations collaborative habits typically requires leadership” (Tom, lines 89-96, p.2).

Tom openly discussed the role that collaboration plays at his institution and referred to it “as the marriage between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, seeking to break out of our silos” (Tom, lines 116-117, p.3). In all of my research and in all of the previous interviews, this was the first time I have heard the partnership between each division described as a “marriage.” This powerful synonym used by Tom, sends the message that his institution embraces collaboration and has infused the elements necessary for effective collaboration throughout the college. “Collaboration is encouraged, fostered and supported at Tom’s institution through the leadership and professional development efforts of senior administrators” (Tom, lines 135-136, p.3).

Unique to institution number four, this college actually incorporates collaboration in the assessment of faculty and staff. “Both faculty and staff are assessed formally on collaboration. They may be assessed on their ability to play well in the sandbox with others either formally or informally. For administrators, it’s formal” (Tom, lines 174-177, p.4). Ironically, the term “sandbox” is a very specific nomenclature that presented itself in earlier interview discussions. When asked to provide his input regarding the proposed model of collaboration, Tom said, “I don’t think of collaboration as a flow chart. I can’t say the algorithmic approach really, really, speaks to me” (Tom, lines 215-218, p.4). He continued “to be effective in this culture, you’re gonna have to get beyond these potential barriers. With leadership that is able to articulate the values of consensus building and collaboration, and what an organization can achieve through collaboration, these barriers to potential collaboration can be overcome, but I think that comes to leadership and a willingness to collaborate across Student Affairs and Academic Affairs” (Tom, lines 237-

253, p.5). Finally, we concluded the interview by Tom saying, “so if you believe in it, I mean if you believe that the health of the organization is at stake, you also have to be willing to make a change” (Tom, lines 254-256, p.5).

### Dani

Dani serves as the Vice President of Student Affairs at the fourth institution participating in this study. In comparison to the other participating members of this study, Dani has the least amount of tenure and experience in her current role as the Vice President of Student Affairs. Additionally, her participation is unique in that she has extensive experience in the division of Academic Affairs. Her past role as a faculty member, coupled with her extensive and broad experience leading college-wide initiatives, propelled her to earn the role as the Vice President of Student Affairs. Traditionally, the leader of the division of Student Affairs or Academic Affairs has demonstrated progressive experience specifically within the division in which they earn their role. When I realized that Dani’s journey to lead the division of Student Affairs was non-traditional, I was eager to learn of the manner in which she collaborates with her the division in which she was previously employed.

Dani began the interview early as she eluded to numerous demands that needed her attention. Although she expressed that her schedule was extremely full for the day, her warm smile and generous greeting conveyed a sense of calmness and interest in providing valuable contributions to this study. Prior to this interview beginning, I was very interested in learning of the unique manner in which this institution cultivates collaboration due to the previous knowledge shared about the marriage that exists between the two divisions in



this study. Although the frenetic pace of her office created a few minor disruptions, she ensured that I had her full attention for the hour that we scheduled the interview.

The formal interview process began with Dani sharing the story regarding the engagement ceremony between the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. “When we did the engagement ceremony during convocation, and it was the proposal that came from me, to the Vice President of Academic Affairs, during convocation where everyone is there, I stated, will you marry Academic Affairs to Student Affairs and we commit to our students completing and being successful?” (Dani, lines 46-52, p.1). She continued by painting the picture of an environment that was shaped by their ability to “create these projects together, work together, and delete or breakdown silos” (Dani, line 55, p.1). According to Dani, this marriage fostered the ability for the faculty to have buy in that “didn’t exist before and that people were excited about” (Dani, lines 53-36, p.1). Her enthusiasm for this marriage was witnessed through the manner in which her voice conveyed a true sense of belonging to each division. Her voice, coupled with her smile and overall happiness regarding the marriage could easily be detected.

When asked about her definition and understanding of collaboration, she responded, “we are partners, equal partners and we are both buying into the idea of putting students first and helping them to complete. It is not one person’s responsibility” (Dani, lines 67-69, p.2). She indicated that the factors leading to successful collaborative practices include “respect and the knowledge across the college of this collaboration and the buy in that we are all a part of this” (Dani, lines 75-79, p.2). State College number four perceives collaboration as “equal partners, it is a part of our strategic plan and one of the

prongs of the Student Affairs strategic plan is to support the academic mission of the college. That's partnership, that's we're in this together" (Dani, lines 96-105, p.2). As Dani continued to refer to partnerships, she also explained, "collaboration is one of our values" (Dani, line 128, p.3).

When asked about the process utilized to cultivate collaboration. She responded by saying, "when people are onboarded at our Human resources orientation. From the beginning they're seeing these are the kind of collaborations that are already here, expect this" (Dani, lines 244-248, p.5). Dani replied to the question about the evaluation and effectiveness of collaborative engagements by saying "culture needs to be one of the prongs of assessment because you can't just take what an institution is doing and go place it somewhere else. It's a part of the culture that's embedded through direct trainings like orientation and onboarding and things like that" (Dani, lines 253-256, p.5). The interview concluded with Dani extending her graces to me and expressing an interest in reviewing the results of the study.

#### Personal Interviews and Hansen's Theory on Collaboration

During the personal interviews, many of the participants mentioned topics related to Hansen's theory. After being shown my visualized model of Hansen's Theory on Collaboration as depicted in figure 2, the participants also indicated that they agreed with most aspects of it.

John expressed an understanding that collaboration entails time, effort, and cost, consistent to Hansen's framework for overcoming the typical barriers associated with non-collaboration. "Well, collaboration is something that, that doesn't happen overnight nor does it happen automatically. It has to be planned out and it has to be driven by somebody. I think if the

leadership of teams, don't practice it, don't preach it, and don't engage into that, nothing's gonna happen. If they don't see that the leaders are capable of collaborating, then why should they?" (John lines 177-181, p.4). John continued by saying "I think it starts with the leadership making sure that they're the ones who set the example and if they don't do that, the rest of the team on both sides of the fence, are not gonna do it. They just don't. They don't see any need for it" (John, lines 183-185, page 4). When asked his thoughts on the proposed model of collaboration as adapted from Hansen's work, he "agreed with all of the indicated barriers except for one" (John, line 386, p.7).

Hansen reiterated the importance of deliberate efforts that need to be practiced by both divisions in order for collaboration to be effective (Hansen, 2009). Similarly, Hansen also indicates that the lack of dedicated and concerted efforts in collaborating was one of the single most detrimental factors impeding effective partnerships.

"If you start with a common goal, it's easier to get everybody there and easier to get everybody working on the same page towards that" (Amy, lines 160-161, page 2). This statement encapsulates Hansen's work declaring that it is the unification of people working towards a common goal that fosters effective collaborative engagements (Hansen, 2009).

As we were approaching the conclusion of Amy's interview, I showed Amy the model regarding collaboration as interpreted by me. Amy's response was that "collaboration requires patience, meetings, and it's costly. Furthermore, we are all so busy and we all wear like fourteen different hats" (Amy, lines 221-224, p.4, 5). This statement also resembles Hansen's barriers to effective collaboration as she clearly indicated the multiple duties and the cost, time, and effort needed to dedicate to making collaboration effective. Finally, Amy further analyzed the

proposed model and after thoughtful deliberation, provided further extrapolation regarding the perceived barriers identified on the model. Specifically, she said “I’m not sure what the fear is about, but there probably is, there probably could be some of that going on. There’s a mentality you know that this is my business, nobody really needs to know about what I’m doing, this is my responsibility, why do I need to tell other people about it. There is probably some of that going on and the unwillingness to collaborate, those at the end, those that some hard ones to get past” (Amy, lines 240-244, p.5). The general unwillingness to collaborate was one of the primary factors Hansen identified as the single most detrimental factor in successful collaborative engagements (Hansen, 2009).

The deliberateness that Jill referenced closely articulates with Hansen’s belief that collaboration takes intentionality, deliberate focus on external constituents, and an overall willingness to collaborate (Hansen, 2009).

As discussed in Chapter 2, Hansen indicated the need to differentiate between “collaboration” and “competition” (Hansen, 2009). Jill alluded to this notion when asked about the factors that impact effective and successful collaborations, “people coming to the collaboration with sort of a competitive mindset, I think is a real problem. Looking at it is a win/lose situation. I get what I want and that means somebody else doesn’t or vice versa. That’s the wrong thing. I also think that sometimes there are structural impediments to collaboration” (Jill, lines 64-67, p.2). An example that she provided regarding the structural impediments included multi-campus reporting structures, where “the structure we set up for that collaboration didn’t match” (Jill, line 72, p.2). She continued to discuss the challenges associated with blurred reporting impacting

collaborative practices as she stated, “if you don’t understand the system that you work in, you can’t collaborate effectively. It’s a systems issue as much as it’s an interpersonal issue” (Jill, lines 77-78, p.2). When asked how collaboration is perceived she responded, “we eat it, sleep it, breath it” (Jill, line 80, p.2). This statement encapsulates the need to indoctrinate collaborative practices in all facets of the organization as supported by Hansen, 2009.

When I inquired about her definition of what Hansen describes as “bad collaboration”, Jill provided a brief pause and a heavy breath, composed her words and then smiled prior to stating the following: “there’s so many kinds of bad collaboration it boggles the mind, but the one that I find personally most irritating is when you’re collaborating, but the decision’s a done deal. So, its kind if you’re there and we want your input, but somehow your input gets translated into some variant of what the convener already wanted to do. It pisses people off and it’s just a waste of all of our time” (Jill, lines 143-148, p.3).

When Jill was provided the opportunity to review the visualized model of collaboration as adapted from Hansen located in Figure 2, she stated “yes, many of these things can in fact be barriers and I could probably say yes, I can think of a circumstance in which any of those things have happened and I could probably add a couple of things to the laundry list” (Jill, lines 323-326, p.7).

Hansen (2009) provided examples of the negative consequences that can happen in business and industry when different departments fail to effectively collaborate. Specifically, he described Sony corporations’ failure to launch the “I-pad.” Similarly, Karen said “business did

ahead of what we did, they found in the silos that operated in business between sales, between product development, between customer relations, and actual manufacturing, created all of these problems so that was the literature we studied and we said that we have the same thing” (Karen, lines 180-183, p.4). In addition, Karen acknowledged the fact that “we live and work in really complex systems and there’s lots of moving parts and no one person can be an expert in all of the parts and repercussions of change” (Karen, lines 175-177, p.4). This statement encapsulates the idea that the specificity and complexity of each division may influence the ability to effectively collaborate. Karen insists that leaders must acknowledge and understand the unique complexity in order to gain a better understanding of the challenges that each respective division is experiencing.

Karen reviewed Hansen’s model of collaboration, she said, “I think he’s nailed it. The positive issues related to the unification of people, cultivation and T-shaped, building nimble networks, grow to be a collaborative leader, it’s also methodologies” (Karen, lines 432-435, p.8). As Karen continued to discuss Hansen’s model of collaboration, one of the most salient items that she discussed in her thorough responses, was “it’s the normalization of the culture” (Karen, line 451, p.9). This statement spoke of the important role that institutional cultural ethos plays in regards to the degree to which collaboration exists within the college.

Nick reviewed Hansen’s model of collaboration and indicated, “his barriers are right on” (Nick, line 11, p.2). After he agreed with the barriers identified in the model the interview concluded by Nick stating, “the biggest thing is communication, the biggest thing is that we have respect and trust for each other” (Nick, lines 118, 121 p.3).

After Andrew analyzed and reviewed the proposed model of collaboration as visualized from Hansen's work. Andrew said, "you have to be willing to talk and to acknowledge that those barriers exist. So there has to be a willingness to tackle what it is about our organization that works well and what is it about our organization that doesn't work well. Sometimes collaboration slows things down and things take too long but you have to be able to have that conversation and acknowledge barriers" (Andrew, lines 263-269, p.5).

Without hesitation, Tom openly described a current situation in that actually directly relates to the principles of collaboration described by Hansen. Specifically, Tom described a situation where a contract was awarded for a certain learning management product. He reiterated his frustration as the division of auxiliary services purchased this product without robust collaborative engagements with members of the faculty senate and Academic Affairs. He continued by telling a story that was reminiscent of Hansen's descriptions of barriers to effective collaboration. Although Tom was not aware of the intricacies of this study nor did he have a thorough understanding of Hansen's work, I was elated to witness first-hand examples of dysfunctional collaborative engagements between institutional departments. Tom shared that due to the inability for these departments to effectively engage one another, the college will take a financial loss as well as an interruption of services to students over an extended period.

Tom's reference to vertical and horizontal attributes of effective collaboration closely resembles Hansen's T-shaped model of collaboration where leaders that effectively communicate down through their own division, have the propensity to also collaborate effectively across the various divisions, throughout the institution.

Dani responded to the question regarding meaningful collaboration in similar fashion to Hansen by stating, “meaningful collaboration is when both parties find it mutually beneficial” (Dani, lines 112-113, p.3). Contrary to meaningful collaboration, she explained her perception of bad collaboration “as when somebody wants to get what they can out of it” (Dani, line 150, p.3). She continued, “collaboration involves both of us starting together and planning it together, good collaboration” (Dani, lines 153-154, p.3). The role of collaboration at her institution “is everywhere. It’s the respect for the other perspective that we might be lacking something. I think culture, when it’s seen from the leadership” (Dani, lines 199, 215, 218, p.4).

After Dani thoroughly examined the proposed model on collaboration, she specified that she “certainly agrees with these things, a hostile work environment and time and cost can be barriers to collaboration and I think when the leaders of the institution say this is a priority, this is something that we’re working towards when it’s not just a priority, it’s an expectation” (Dani, lines 292-296, p.6).

Prior to the first interview commencing, I realized that the physical office location of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs at State College Number 2 was immediately next door to one another. The physical proximity of their work locations immediately drew my attention as I reflected on the principles reiterated by Morton T. Hansen. These principles by Hansen as discussed in previous chapters of this study were observed while I was waiting for the first interview to begin. The physical office structure fostered these two leaders to formulate and sustain effective, daily interactions that ensured transparency and collegiality simply due to the extreme



closeness of these two offices. Furthermore, their offices actually had a door that connected their inner-offices. They did not even need to physically exit their office to walk into the other's office; but rather, they could enter and re-enter through the internal connecting door. Prior to the interview beginning, I witnessed an over-abundance of what Hansen describes as the unification of people (Hansen, 2009). Specifically, as an outsider to this organization, I could not decipher or differentiate the various separated departments. Rather, it appeared as though all employees were operating under the same guise and that they all worked for the "*college*," in lieu of a "*department*." The strategic location and proximity of these two offices appeared to not happen by chance, but rather through purposeful and deliberate actions with the ultimate goal of fostering dynamic interlude between these two leaders.

After a short, but thoughtful interchange of philosophical notions that supported the need to have a dedicated building for the sole purpose of building, sustaining, and cultivating collaborative partnerships, I became keenly aware of the importance of convergent vs. divergent thinking as related to divisional relations within higher education. Finally, this further supported the importance of this qualitative research study and closely supported the philosophical underpinnings of successful collaborations as reiterated by Morton Hansen.

### Summary

In this chapter, I constructed in a comprehensive manner, the profiles of each one of the eight participants. My interview process allowed them to present their voices within the uniqueness of their collegiate environment.

## CHAPTER 5: A THOROUGH ANALYSIS OF THE COLLECTIVE VOICES OF THE PARTICIPANTS: RESEARCH FINDINGS

### Introduction

The data inquiry consisted of a non-linear process that involved a thorough analysis of each participant's response. The vast amount of information reiterated by the research participants was first analyzed through a manual, comprehensive data reduction process as indicated in Appendix G. The primary themes were uploaded into the *NVivo* software version 10 and data reduction was completed. Through the utilization of *NVivo*, major themes emerged which allowed for the generation of categories and thematic similarities. A deep analysis of the phenomena under investigation was able to be extrapolated through the *NVivo* software program. The data reviewed by *NVivo* allowed for the development of nodes. The Nodes serve as primary themes that emerged through the collective voices of each participant. This process served as the pathway for vigorous analysis of the vast information contained in each personal interview.

### Research Question 1

*How do the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at public state colleges located in the southern United States, perceive their collaboration with each other?*

The Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Vice Presidents of Student Affairs at public state colleges located in the southern region of the United States perceive their partnerships as highly collaborative, deliberate, and with a team focused approach that is centered on the success of their students. Specifically, under the heading of Part 1 of the interview protocol, there was one specific question pertaining to their perception of collaboration. In review of the transcripts with assistance from *NVivo*, there were eighteen specific references to the term "team."

Although the Vice Presidents indicated that they are highly collaborative and are guided by the team approach, they were unable to vigorously quantify the specific elements or variables that would easily classify their work as low, medium, or highly collaborative. This inability to discern the specific attributes that would indicate a highly collaborative team as compared to a medium level of collaboration supports the notion of the ambiguous nature of collaborative practices. It appears to be the normalization of the culture that fosters the belief that to not be collaborative is indicative of one not being able to effectively work with others. This has taken precedence over the actual act of effective collaborative practices.

The culture within the higher educational system of state colleges is one that supports the idea of togetherness and teamwork. This historical and cultural ethos has promoted the notion that if you are not collaborative, then you will have a very challenging time remaining employed within that environment. “The cardinal sin, the mortal sin is to be claimed that you weren’t collaborative. It’s like a dart in the heart” (Karen, lines 334-335, p.6). The overarching societal and cultural influence of the need to collaborate appears to have taken precedence over the actual art of effective collaboration. Although the voices of the Vice Presidents reflected a perception of being highly collaborative with a team focused approach, their perception may have been overshadowed by this simplistic notion that to not collaborate is a mortal sin.

Table 8 identifies the participants’ perception of collaboration through *NVivo* software analysis. The primary commonality and the manner in which the participants perceive collaboration is through a team mentality and a teamwork approach. Furthermore, the overarching concepts emphasized were the importance of relationships, partnerships, and togetherness. It is commonly understood that one’s perception is highly variable and dependent

on their education, upbringing and professional experiences. Although one’s perception can be highly variable, this study showed that there was a low degree of variability as the primary theme of teamwork emerged through the process of data reduction strategies, the development of nodes through *NVivo* software, and assisted in the final three emergent themes. Furthermore, one participant’s response (Jill) reiterated that collaboration is firmly ingrained in the cultural ethos of the institution of which she is employed. This was demonstrated by Jill’s statement, we “eat it, sleep it, breath it” (Jill, line 80, p.2).

*Table 7: Research Study Participants’ Perception of Collaboration*

| <b>PARTICIPANT</b> | <b>PERCEPTION OF COLLABORATION</b>       |
|--------------------|--|
| Amy                | “Team approach”                          |
| Andrew             | “Teamwork and Relationships”             |
| Dani               | “For us, we are equal partners”          |
| Jill               | “We eat it, sleep it, breath it”         |
| John               | “We simply call a meeting with the team” |
| Karen              | “Team”                                   |
| Nick               | “We’re in this together”                 |
| Tom                | “Deliberate and Rationale”               |

### Research Question 2

*How do the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at public state colleges located in the southern United States construct collaborations?*

Through deep analysis of the transcripts of the personal interviews in harmony with the utilization of *NVivo* qualitative software, the data reduction process identified eight distinct categories that answer research question number 2. The eight primary categories that have emerged include the need for common goals/mutual benefit, the willingness to collaborate, trust, communication, leadership, relationships, institutional culture, and a deliberate and focused

effort on the construction and maintenance of these relationships. These eight categories are identified through the data reduction process in Appendix G. Based on the participants' responses, these eight categories allowed for the identification of primary themes. Three emergent themes were then developed through the data reduction of the categories identified. Each of these themes serve as the overarching umbrella in which the categories were directly related to, or distinctly similar. These themes are identified in Appendix G. Through qualitative analysis, the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at public state colleges located in the southern United States construct collaborations through the human element, unification of people, and through the institutional ethos. Table 8 below, identifies the research study participants' construction of collaboration. Appendix G clearly identifies the manner in which the categories directly correspond to the three primary themes that have emerged. As shown in Table 8, the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs primarily construct collaborations through the myriad of facets that comprise the human element, the ability to unify members of the organization, as well as through the cultural ethos as developed through the leadership of the institution.

*Table 8: Research Study Participants' Construction of Collaboration*

| <b>PARTICIPANT</b> | <b>CONSTRUCTION OF COLLABORATION</b>                    |
|--------------------|---|
| Amy                | "Working toward a common goal"                          |
| Andrew             | "Trust in that relationship"                            |
| Dani               | "Marriage between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs" |
| Jill               | "Collaboration has to be deliberate"                    |
| John               | "We simply call a meeting with the team"                |
| Karen              | "The human element"                                     |
| Nick               | "Willingness to have an open mindset"                   |
| Tom                | "Transparency of communication, honesty and integrity"  |

### Summary

Although the two primary research questions posed have been answered through this qualitative study, the enriching stories of the participants have discovered a myriad of additional items and factors pertaining to the global understanding of collaboration. It is intricately important to understand the complexities associated with such a broad topic as collaboration. The collective voices of the research participants uncovered these complexities through the manner in which they conveyed the fact that the ambiguity of collaboration continues to plague the academy. The differing perspectives of all facets of collaboration serve as testament to the diversity of opinions, perspectives, and experiences that encompass the vast topic of collaboration.

## **CHAPTER 6: THEMATIC GENERATION: WHEN DIFFERENT VOICES SPEAK AS ONE**

### The Story Behind the Story

According to Hansen, if the world understood how to collaborate better, the world would work better (Hansen, 2009). This statement reflects the need for business, industry, and higher educational organizations to continually improve the modality in which they work. Collaboration should be a simplistic notion as the importance of getting along has been encouraged since kindergarten. However, effective collaboration is much more complex than simply learning to get along with one another. The façade that permeates collaboration has resulted in a false belief that people are collaborating, when in reality, they are simply performing the role that they have been culturally motivated to perform. Additionally, effective collaboration is considered a soft science as there is not a definitive formula or outline on how to effectively collaborate.

Developing partnerships that produce results for the betterment of any organization cannot be easily transferred to all members of the organization, as the cultural elements tend to not foster these effective partnerships. Furthermore, the common belief that more collaboration is better than no collaboration, coupled with the over-simplified understanding that simply talking with one another constitutes effective collaboration, has resulted in an ambiguous understanding of how to authentically collaborate. While some collaborative ventures achieve excellent results, the majority actually backfire (Hansen). The lost time, money, and severed professional relationships contributes to organizational frustration and decreased willingness to collaborate with colleagues in other divisions. As higher education continues to serve the



dynamic, diverse needs of today's college students, it is essential that all institutional efforts lead with a cohesive, student-focused mentality.

The results of this study support many of the philosophical principles identified by Hansen. However, one of the most unique facets revealed in this study was in the relative uncertainty demonstrated by the research participants. *NVivo* identified 363 specific times that the work “*think*” was spoken by the research participants (Appendix H). The reason why the term “*I think*” was not directly captured is due to the limitations of a three-letter limitation that is hard-coded into the *NVivo* software. Therefore, “*I*” was not included in the *NVivo* analysis. The utilization of the term “*I think*,” instead of the term, “*I know*” demonstrates a certain lack of confidence in their responses. Furthermore, it supports the notion that there is not a certain equation, formula, or script that can be followed to elicit effective collaboration in any organization. This is due to the human elements of trust, respect, honesty, transparency, working together for mutually beneficial outcomes, as well as the ability to find the time to devote to creating and cultivating collaborative partnerships. Finally, the high rate of the term “think” also supports the notion that collaboration is highly susceptible to one's personal interpretation as formulated from their own perspective, experiences, as well as through their individual personality.

In any research study, it is important to identify the emergent themes and analyze the data generated (Cresswell, 2003). It is also important to explore the hidden items that may not have been verbally spoken in the personal interviews. As previously mentioned, to be considered “*non-collaborative*” has been made equivalent to a cardinal sin, or a mortal sin. Societal influence on being a non-collaborator, has resulted in the dramatic inability for professional

colleagues to differentiate between good collaboration and bad collaboration. Furthermore, the over utilization of the term has resulted in decreased practices of genuine and authentic collaborations, and replaced with simple talking or having a meeting with representatives from other divisions.

The participants in this study serve as members of the President's executive cabinet and report directly to the President of their college. Therefore, due to the role that they play, coupled with the detrimental effects of being considered someone who does not collaborate, their responses may have been grandiose in nature. Through this study as well as through the literature, it appears that leaders in the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs prefer to err on the side of ensuring that the organizational perception is one of over-collaboration. However, the authenticity and efficacy of the actual collaborative engagement is one that needs further critical inquiry, examination, and thorough analysis.

During the past decade, there has been an increased emphasis in higher education on accountability (Roggow, 2014). Leaders in each educational division have become entrenched in data analysis processes that depend on the financial well-being of the organization (Roggow). Increased accountability measures, increased federal and state mandates, decreased student enrollment, and decreased financial funding has had a dramatic effect on state colleges throughout the United States (Roggow). The common mantra throughout the state colleges has been to "*do more with less.*" The pace of work has increased and the amount of work has increased which has contributed to one of the most challenging aspects of creating effective partnerships: time. The time and cost element continues to pervade the academy and has resulted in historic shifts in professionals dedicating the time and energy needed to develop and

cultivate collaborative engagements. “It takes a lot of energy and it takes time and those two things feel like limited resources lots of times. So I do think that while it is productive in the long run, it is difficult to execute in the moment especially under crisis. So you have to take into account the human factor. It takes a great deal of human capital, maturity, and a willingness to do it/. It would be easier if it was authoritarian and unilateral, it’s my department. I’ll make the decisions is way easier as so when people are stressed for time, and when they feel they have 20,000 things to do and five minutes to do it, it’s hard.” (Karen, lines 197-204, p.4). The aforementioned statement by Karen encapsulates the notion that the lack of time and energy to devote to collaboration has resulted in dramatic changes in the manner in which people work with others outside of their division.

Accountability practices in higher education are primarily focused on student completion rates, retention metrics, and job placement rates (Roggow, 2014). In addition, the assessment and measurement of student learning outcomes, accreditation requirements, and student engagement rates have taken precedence over the need to assess and measure collaborative engagements. The participants in this study reiterated this concept when asked how they assess and measure collaboration. “I wouldn’t say that we have a formal mechanism for assessing and measuring collaboration” (Karen, lines 383-384, p.7). “I don’t know that we measure or assess it” (Andrew, line 234, p.5). Although this study revealed that collaboration is not formally measured, supportive evidence indicates that it is an informal process. “Faculty and staff are assessed on their ability to play well in the sandbox with others either formally or informally” (Tom, lines 175-176, p.4). Additionally, institutions are “making data driven decisions and I am not sure that collaboration is on anybody’s list to make” (Dani, lines 263-264, p.5). Thus, the

need to make data driven decisions and the need to improve accountability measures across the college has been overshadowed by the need to assess and measure collaboration. Finally, Amy stated that “we don’t measure collaboration exactly, we don’t have a matrix that points out if we collaborate well or not” (Amy, lines 344-345, p.7). Without the emphasis placed on the need to assess the efficacy of intra-departmental collaborations, leaders in these divisions may acquire a false sense that it is effective. According to Hansen, these false beliefs can increase the level of frustration amongst employees and contribute to the general unwillingness to collaborate on future endeavors (Hansen, 2009).

As previously hypothesized from the results of this study, the political environment and the societal belief that more collaboration is better than less collaboration, has had a detrimental effect on authentic collaborative practices. However, this study did reiterate the importance on engaging with other divisions for the betterment of student. The focus on collaboration due to student success, student engagement, and student completion was demonstrated in the 196 times that the participants’ referred to “*students*” and the 71 times they referred to the “*student*” (Appendix H). Collaboration and student success was a dedicated sub-heading in chapter 2 of this study. Thus, it is inspiring to learn that the Vice President’s in this study collaborate for the betterment of their students as this is supported throughout the literature. “Collaboration has to put students first” (Jill, line 43, p.1). “What’s in the best interest of the student? What can we do that’s in the best interest of the student to ensure his or her success” (Nick, lines 49-50, p.1). Nick also stated “whatever we can do to move the institution forward and make our students more successful and that’s the basis for how we make decisions” (Nick, lines 69-70 p.2). These

statements support the fact that collaborative efforts are driven by improving processes and procedures for student success.

A prominent item that merits further examination is the power of the human element in effective collaborative engagements. The human element was one of three primary themes that emerged from this study (Appendix G). For purposes of this study, the human element refers to characteristics that comprise emotions, feelings, thoughts, communication, and the basic human constructs that assist in the formulation of relationships. Furthermore, the essential ingredients that make up the human element as identified in this study include trust, transparency, respect, commonalities, personalities, leadership, mindset, and a willingness to develop effective relationships. Through the literature and through this study, it has become apparent that without the development of these essential items, effective collaboration is unlikely to occur. The aforementioned ingredients in the human element must be a part of the learned behavior of the organization. They are transmitted through the leadership, institutional culture and firmly ingrained in the people who comprise the organization. The participants in this study did indicate that collaboration is included in the onboarding process through their human resources department. However, one must examine the level and degree to which new employees can assimilate to a collaborative environment simply through attending a seminar with the human resources department. According to Dani “I think collaboration is cultivated when people are on-boarded at our human resources orientation” (Dani, line 244, p.5). Similarly, Karen stated, “collaboration is cultivated during the onboarding process and then we have a lot of staff development and tools of collaboration that we definitely teach and model” (Karen, lines 320-

321, p.6). The modeling behavior that Karen refers to directly correlates with the need for leaders to ensure that they are demonstrating effective collaborative practices.

Leadership, institutional culture, and the human factor are the primary elements in the practice of effective collaborative engagements between different divisions at state colleges that participated in this study. Although the information generated through the collective voices of the research participants were believed to be accurate and true to their personal beliefs, their perception of true and authentic collaborative practices could have been influenced by the normalization of the culture within higher education. The normalization of the culture refers to the societal and historical emphasis placed on the simple concept of working together for the betterment of the organization. In Andrew's words; "in an organization where the leader mandates change and is the focus of change, and works in silos, the organization is only as good as that one person's ideas and if you see that leadership approach, you're not encouraged to give your best. You're not encouraged to cross lines. You're not encouraged to meet and solve problems and so then, your organization is only as good as that one person. Where I think collaboration brings to the table is the group strengths and maybe ignoring some of those lines or be willing to cross some of those barriers for the betterment of the institution" (Andrew, lines 122-127, p.3). Higher education is the pathway to society's continual evolution. It is imperative that leaders throughout higher education ensure that deliberate effort is placed on the formulation and sustainment of effective partnerships. It is essential that these leaders are able to identify when to collaborate and when not to collaborate and break down silos that decrease the success of the most important person on campus: the student.

### Theme 1: Human Element

The first theme that emerged through this study was the human element. This theme was identified through the manner in which the participants emphasized the importance of items pertaining to human traits and human characteristics. Although the participants were not directly asked a question regarding how the human factor influences collaborative practices, this theme clearly emerged through their voices. Karen mentioned the importance of the human element in her interview by stating “I don’t quite want to use the word unnatural but it takes, it takes a great deal of human capital to do it and, ya know, maturity, and ah willingness” (Karen lines 200-201, p.4).

Relationships were an important aspect of this theme as stated by both Jill and Amy supporting the notion that the factors that comprise the human element are supported by the voices of the participants. Jill identified “there’s social relationships, social relationships make a huge difference in collaboration” (Jill lines 262-263, p.6). Amy expressed this by stating “I think a lot of it does start with the two Vice Presidents and um, their relationship and um, their respect for each other. I think it starts there and that sets the tone for how the two teams should be working together” (Amy lines 91-93, p.2). Additional support for one of the primary themes of the human element can be found in Nick’s statements about trust. “Um, I really think it’s open communication, working together on a regular basis, ah a know leaving turfdom at the door, knowing that we trust each other” (Nick lines 80-81, p.2). “Um, we’re all different folks, but again, the biggest thing is that we have respect and trust for each other” (Nick lines 121-122, p.2).

Although complex, the human element contains a myriad of items that comprise characteristics that can be identified as human elements or human factors. Through categorical recognition and through the data reduction process as identified in Figure 4, the items that make-up the human element, as reiterated through the voice of the research participants include the following: personality traits, willingness to collaborate, leadership styles, genuine desire to collaborate, respect, trust, open mindset, values, communication, care, and relationships.

Each of the aforementioned items correlate directly with human elements or human factors. For this study, I chose to utilize the nomenclature of the human element as this was the proper word that correctly encompasses all of the traits described by the research participants.

### Theme 2: Cultural Ethos

One of the themes generated through this research study was the important role that cultural ethos and institutional culture has in the construction and sustainment of effective collaborative engagements. Appendix G identifies that seven participants' referenced "culture" a total of forty times. Amy said "I think it has everything to do with collaboration" (Amy, line 167, p.4). Similarly, Andrew said "I see the collaboration definitely is the culture; it reflects the president's leadership" (Andrew, lines 222-223, p.5). Through the collective voices of the participants, there appears to be a direct correlation between the institutional culture and the leadership of the institution. This connection appears to be essential in the manner in which the cultural ethos of the college is fostered, encouraged, and supported. According to Jill, "it's your institutional culture either is collaborative or it isn't. I mean, I don't see it as we're in a culture where we can collaborate. It's we are a collaborative culture and that's just a different animal" (Jill, lines 290-292, p.6). Additional support for the notion that leadership and effective



collaboration are synonymous with one another was in Nick's statement; "I think from the top down" (Nick, line 85, p.2). Further support for the power that culture has on divisions' ability to collaborate was demonstrated by John's statement "it influences it tremendously" (John, line 321, p.6).

As previously demonstrated, the power of institutional culture's effect on the willingness of the employees to formulate and sustain effective partnerships is firmly ingrained in the ethos of the college. Culture is developed over time and is the direct result of the historical plight of the college, transmitted through the leadership style of the college president.

### Theme 3: Unification of People

The importance of unifying people for effective collaboration was identified through the data reduction process in Figure 4. Specifically, the need to unify people served as one of the three primary themes and was a result of the following thematic phrases of the participants: common goals/mutual benefit, willingness to collaborate, communication, and leadership.

The best example of collaboration was discovered in the fourth state college that participated in this study. The fourth state college approaches collaboration between the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs as a "marriage." Although the marriage was briefly examined in the fourth chapter, the uniqueness of this practice deserves further examination. "Will you marry Academic Affairs to Student Affairs and we commit to our students completing and being successful" (Dani, lines 51-52, p.1). This statement by Dani at State College number 4 was stated in front of the entire college at their annual convocation ceremony. The mock wedding ceremony took place, which included music, a backdrop of wedding rings, and an actual commitment to each other's departments. While this is an example

of a true commitment and passion for the cultivating of effective partnerships, it was not a practice that I could find replicated in any of the literature nor was it mentioned in any of the other seven participating institutions. During the commitment ceremony, Dani said, “we’re partners and we’re going to create these projects together, and work together and delete or breakdown silos” (Dani, lines 54-56. p.1). This notion of “*togetherness*” that Dani mentioned appeared ninety times in the personal interviews with the research participants. (Appendix H). The term togetherness was directly correlated with one of the primary themes, the human element as documented in Appendix G.

Although the mock wedding was demonstrative of the commitment between divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at state college number four, it must be noted that this type of symbolic gesture is very rare in academia. It is also important to note that Dani is the only participant in this study who has extensive experience in the other division from which she is currently employed. She served as a faculty member as well as in a variety of academic-related roles, prior to earning the position as Vice President of Student Affairs. This cross-pollination of experience may serve as the impetus for the grandiose manner in which their two divisions have pledged their commitment to one another. It appears that their ability to effectively collaborate stems from the cultivation of the mutual understanding and common goals that have permeated throughout their divisions. Additionally, this is a primary example of their ability to practice Hansen’s belief of the need to unify people and build nimble networks (Hansen, 2009).

#### Barriers to Collaboration

According to Hansen (2009), one of the critical aspects of effective collaboration is knowing when to collaborate and when not to. Hansen’s disciplined collaboration philosophy

also supports the notion that in order to master the art of effective collaboration, leaders must be able to identify when it is best not to collaborate (Hansen). Additional barriers to effective collaboration that were identified by Hansen and visualized in Figure 2 include issues related to the inability to unify people, time, cost and specialization of disciplines (Hansen). Based on the vast amount of information pertaining to these barriers as reiterated by Hansen, a question was included in the interview protocol (Appendix E). Specifically, the research participants were shown the proposed model of collaboration and then asked the following question: “*What processes do you use to remove perceived barriers to effective collaboration?*” In review of the NVivo categorization of the participants’ responses, there was not a commonality identified pertaining to this question. However, the responses of the participants did reflect the importance of institutional culture as well as the cultivation of the human element. “Create an atmosphere where people can do that” (Amy, line 271, p.5). “It’s the normalization of the culture” (Karen, line 451, p.9). “I think maybe its trust” (Andrew, line 293, p.6). Although the participants did not reiterate a definitive strategy that they use to remove the perceived barriers to effective collaboration, they did express the importance of the role that trust, communication, and institutional culture plays in removing the perceived barriers to effective collaborative practices.

Hansen (2009) also reiterated the harmful impact that organizational complexity and specialization has on the ability to effectively collaborate. Participants in this study were asked: “*How does the specificity and the complexity of each division, impact collaboration?*” Similar to Hansen, Amy stated, “I think it sets up barriers” (Amy, line 147, p.3). Contrary to Amy’s perception of the impact of the complexities associated with each division, Tom reported that “it deepens the collaboration because it depends on awareness” (Tom, line 254, p.5). We can see the

variance in the perception of the way in which the specificity of each department is impacted by collaboration through the aforementioned statements. Tom also reviewed the proposed model of collaboration and said, “I don’t think of collaboration as a flow chart and I can’t say that the algorithmic approach really speaks to me” (Tom, lines 215-218, p.4). Tom was specifically referring to the barriers identified on the proposed model and continued by stating, “it’s hard for me to imagine an unhealthy culture where people don’t want to collaborate” (Tom lines 220-221, p.4). Although the barriers to effective collaboration were understood by the research participants, there was not consensus regarding these factors. Additional barriers to effective collaborative practices will be discussed in the next paragraph.

#### Bad Collaboration, No Collaboration, and Meaningful Collaboration

When discussing barriers to effective collaboration, it is imperative that organizations properly recognize and differentiate between bad collaboration, no collaboration, and meaningful collaboration. These three aspects were clearly identified by Hansen as critical elements to effective partnerships (Hansen, 2009). Therefore, this study merits further discussion and analysis of these items as they also can serve as barriers that decrease the efficacy of collaborative engagements.

Through analysis of the participants’ definition of bad collaboration, the overarching commonality generated is when the decision is already made, prior to the collaborative engagement beginning. “There’s so many kinds of bad collaboration it boggles the mind, but the one that I find personally most irritating is when you’re collaborating, but the decision is a done deal. So, it’s kind of you’re there and we want your input, but somehow your input gets translated into some variant of what the convener already wanted to do. It pisses people off and

it's just a waste of all of our time" (Jill, lines 143-148, p.3). Similarly, "bad collaboration to me would really just be a veil, where you've really got a predetermined idea of what you want to do and you're just going through the motions for the motion's sake" (Nick, lines 40-41, p.1). These statements of the participants encapsulate the underlying challenges of effective collaboration and are primary examples of the façade that overshadows authentic and genuine collaborative engagements.

An additional salient point that emerged in the personal interviews regarding bad collaboration is "saying you're working together, but behind their backs, talking negatively about the other division" (Amy, lines 83-84, p.2). Negative talk about the other division results in the detrimental dismantling of the basic constructs of successful collaborations. Furthermore, once this relationship is severed, the foundational elements of trust, transparency, and relationships may be compromised for perpetuity.

When asked their definition of meaningful collaboration, the participant's responses reflected the need to embrace the human elements of respect, authenticity, and honesty. "Meaningful collaboration begins with respect" (Amy, line 66, p.2). "Honest conversations and being authentic with one another" (Andrew, lines 68-69, p.2). Although these traits seem simple to demonstrate in a professional setting, the willingness to practice these basic foundational expectations appears to be overshadowing by competing demands, greater accountability standards, and increased work pressures to produce student success.

### Summary

This chapter provided a thorough description of the information generated through this qualitative study. Although a myriad of categories and information was conveyed by the

participants, through qualitative research, three primary themes emerged: the need to embrace the human element, enhancement of the cultural ethos and the unification of people emerged.

## **CHAPTER 7: CREATING A NEW MODEL OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND STUDENT AFFAIRS**

### Introduction

The previous chapter provided a thorough description of the results generated through qualitative inquiry. Furthermore, chapter six answered the two research questions posed through the utilization of data reduction strategies coupled with *NVivo* analysis. This chapter will present the new, current model of collaboration as reiterated through the collective voices of the research participants. In addition, this chapter will briefly review grounded theory as this served as the methodology used in this qualitative study. Finally, this chapter will summarize the process utilized to develop the new model of collaboration as well as discuss the variability from the proposed model as presented.

### The Hypothesized Model

Prior to understanding the auspices of the new, current model of collaboration that has been developed from this study, the proposed model presented in Figure 2 must be revisited. Part three of the interview protocol contained a specific question for the participants to respond to the proposed model that I developed through the interpretation of Morton Hansen's work on collaboration. The question asked; *"Let me show you a model regarding collaboration as developed by Morton Hansen. Openly discuss your thoughts pertaining to this model. How do you relate to this model of collaboration?"* (Appendix E). According to *NVivo*, there were a total of twenty-two distinct responses from the eight participants. There was a high degree of differentiation in the responses that ranged from total agreement with the model to total disagreement with the model. "I think he's nailed it; the issues related to unification of people,

cultivation and T-shaped management, building nimble networks, grow to be a collaborative leader” (Karen, lines 432-437, p.8) “You have to be willing to talk and to acknowledge that those barriers exist so there has to be an openness and willingness to talk about what works well and what does not work well. Sometimes collaboration slows things down and things take too long. You have to be able to have that conversation and acknowledge those barriers” (Andrew, lines 263-269, p.5). “I don’t think of collaboration as a flow chart first of all” (Tom, lines 215-216, p.4). Amy stated in her interview, “this brings up things I didn’t even think about. It’s not really efficient. To collaborate requires patience, meetings and those things are costly. We’re all so busy and we all wear like fourteen different hats so it’s a prioritization and it’s a commitment to be collaborative that’s costly and sometimes inefficient to be collaborative” (Amy, lines 223-233, p.5). These items directly correspond to Hansen’s barriers of effective collaboration (Hansen, 2009). Specifically, participants reiterated the need to be deliberate and thoughtful in regards to practicing effective collaboration with emphasis placed on the time and cost factors that serve as primary barriers. Although there was not an overall consensus generated through the participants’ responses, there was agreement that those factors identified as barriers can and do exist in institutions where the leadership and culture do not promote effective partnerships throughout the organization.

The hypothesized model presented in Figure 2 was developed during the early stages of the dissertation proposal process. This model was firmly grounded in the theoretical framework developed by Morton T. Hansen. It is understood that the complexity and vastness of Hansen’s research on collaboration cannot be easily depicted in one simplistic model. However, this model was created based on Hansen’s verbal articulation of disciplined collaboration (Hansen, 2009). As



stated in chapter two, Hansen's disciplined collaboration model contains leadership elements of determining when collaboration should occur and when it should not occur, and developing the ability and willingness to collaborate when needed (Hansen, 2009). Furthermore, the hypothesized model contains additional information regarding Hansen's T-shaped management strategies that enforce the relation between collaborating throughout the unit in which one belongs, and the ability to collaborate effectively across different divisions (Hansen, 2009). This hypothesized model was constructed solely through my interpretation of Hansen's research (Figure 2). Through critical inquiry and extensive research on collaboration, a deeper understanding of the intricacies and complexities of collaboration has been acquired.

#### The Development Process of a New Model

The development process of the new, current model of collaboration began when the personal interviews were first scheduled with the research participants. Through the scheduling process, I observed a high level of interest in their participation in this study. Their interest, coupled with their verbal willingness and excitement to participate, allowed me to begin to develop the idea that the topic of collaboration is not as elusive as I may have thought prior to beginning this research journey. During the interview process, I reflected on the hypothesized model with anxious curiosity as to the results that would be generated. It was during this time that I also turned my focus on additional research pertaining to collaborative practices in higher education.

The development process of the new model of collaboration began with multiple reviews of the audio recordings of each of the eight personal interviews. These recordings were listened to until I could actually predict the next words that were being stated. Similar to memorizing a

song, I matured with the responses of the participants in similar fashion to how an actor would memorize their lines. The primary reason for this thorough analysis is that my preference is to learn through auditory modality first, followed by visual review of the personal transcripts. In respect to ensuring full transparency in this study, there was a four-week delay in the transcription process due to the transcriptionist enduring a family tragedy. Therefore, I continued to listen to the audio recordings during this four-week period. Once I received the transcripts of the personal interviews, I organized them in a binder and provided my dissertation chair with her copy. I also constructed my own copy and I began the data reduction process (Appendix G).

The next step in the development process of a new model was to highlight salient and important items that emerged from the transcripts. The highlighted responses to the interview questions were then written down on paper. Categorical recognition began to take place through the identification of common items. (Appendix G). Through the continued process of arranging phrases under the heading of categorical recognition, thematic phrases began to emerge.

### Deep Analysis

Simultaneous to the manual identification of categories, each transcript was loaded into the software program, *NVivo*, version 10. *NVivo* serves as the respected qualitative research software that assists the researcher with the organization, identification, and categorization of commonalities, and themes. In addition, *NVivo* allows the researcher to develop deeper insights and fosters the ability to make informed decisions pertaining to large amount of data gathered. Nodes were then developed in the *NVivo* program, which serve as the identification of the most prominent items that were identified through the participants' responses. The questions in the interview protocol were then entered into *NVivo* and categorized according to how the questions

were organized. It was at this time when I participated in three separate online workshops specifically designed for *NVivo* users. It was due to these trainings that I broadened my knowledge and expertise of the intricacies of this software program. Furthermore, I learned valuable strategies on how to thoroughly examine the nodes developed as well as utilize the helpful tools in the word frequency area of *NVivo*.

Through robust analysis and through the utilization of *NVivo*, all of the data generated through the personal interviews were entered and coded appropriately. Thematic phrases were then developed, as shown in Figure 4. These phrases represent the items that encapsulated the majority of the smaller statements identified through categorical recognition. The thematic phrases identified, represented the over-arching themes that directly related to the many phrases identified through categorical recognition (Figure 4). Through this process, the emergent themes identified are as follows; (a) common goals/mutual benefit, (b) willingness to collaborate, (c) trust, (d) communication, (e) leadership, (f), relationships, (g) institutional culture, (h) deliberate. These thematic phrases were then narrowed down into final themes that represent these phrases and include the phrases identified through the categorical recognition process.

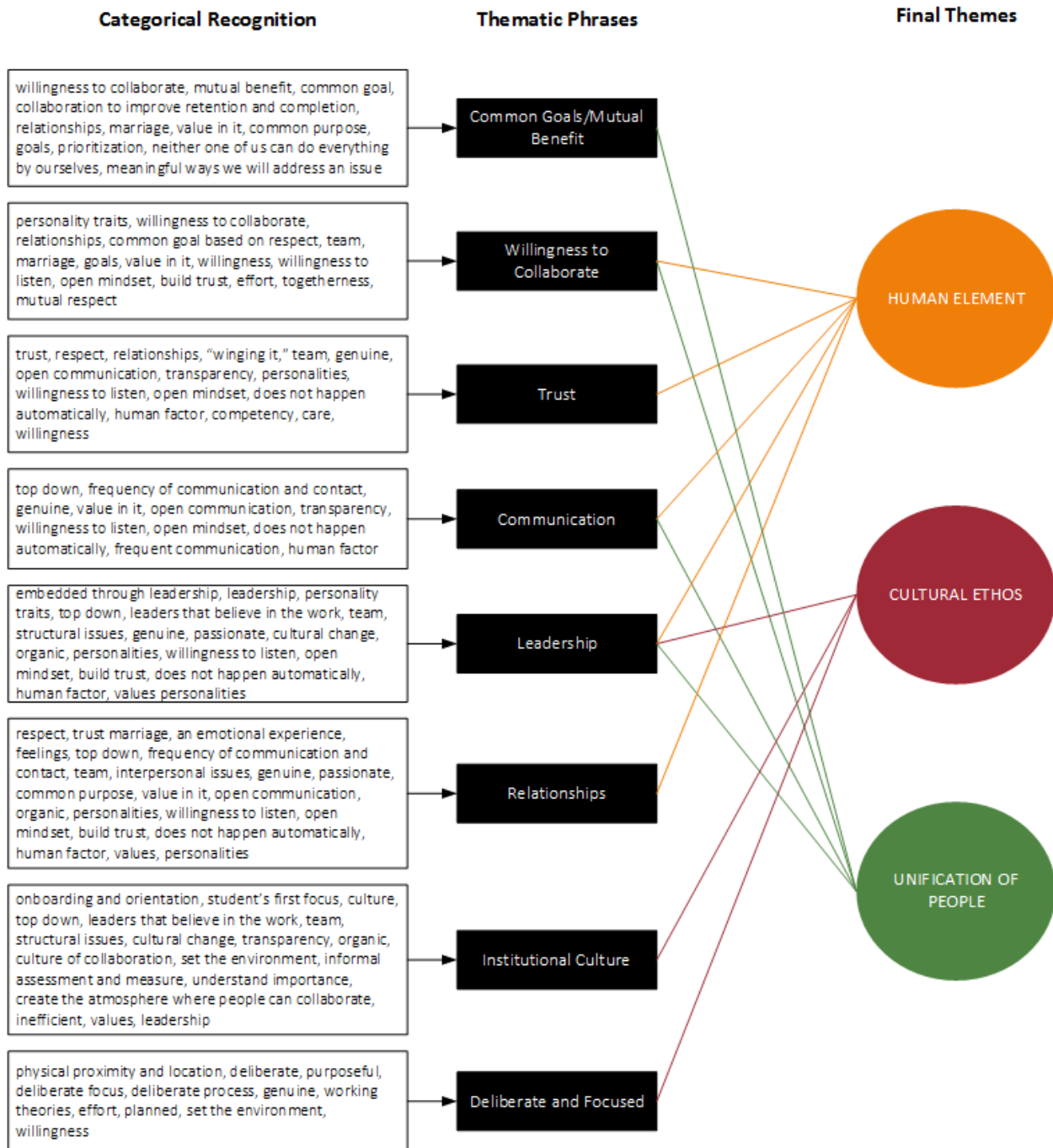


Figure 4: Fortunato data reduction process

Upon review of the nodes, categories and themes generated, I realized that there was congruency developing with the hypothesized model identified in Figure 2. Additionally, the

themes generated were strikingly similar to Hansen's theoretical framework of disciplined collaboration. Through qualitative analysis of the personal interview responses, coupled with manual data reduction and *NVivo* qualitative software, a new model of collaboration between the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs was developed (Figure 5). It is noted that the complexities of collaboration and the varying ideologies regarding effective collaborative practices cannot be easily depicted in a simple schematic diagram. As previously mentioned, there is not a formula or equation that can represent the many nuances identified through this qualitative study. Figure 5 represents the new model of collaboration generated from the collective voices of the research participants.

#### Data Summary

Through qualitative analysis, this research study identified three primary themes directly related to how the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs perceive and construct collaboration. In addition to the primary themes that were generated, a thorough analysis and understanding of additional salient items that warrant further discussion are included in this data summary.

Through the qualitative analysis generated through *NVivo*, the word frequency chart located in Appendix H, identified prominent words from the research study participants. The threshold utilized for the word frequency was twenty. Although there were many other common words identified by *NVivo*, the words that were spoken under twenty times were insignificant and not relevant to the data generated in this study.

A New Model of Collaboration Between the Divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs  
at State Colleges located in the Southern Region of the United States

Using the development process discussed previously, the three themes that emerged were the human element, cultural ethos, and the unification of people. As previously mentioned, there is not a formula or equation that can represent the many nuances identified through this qualitative study. Figure 5 represents the new model of collaboration generated from the collective voices of the research participants. This model demonstrates that effective collaboration is centered on student success. The human element of the faculty and staff contributes to the cultural ethos of the institution. Those factors contribute to the unification of people, which, as long as barriers can be avoided or overcome, lead to collaborative engagements that promote student achievement.

Additionally, this model demonstrates the inter-relation and inter-dependency on each of the three themes that emerged from this study. In essence, this study indicated the need for the divisions under study, to embrace the human element, develop the proper cultural elements, and unify members of the organization. Without the aforementioned components, it is probable to hypothesize that effective, disciplined collaboration may be compromised. This model also demonstrates the myriad of factors that must be present in order for collaboration to be authentic and genuine. Specifically, this model begins with the general willingness to develop relationships, achieve common goals that serve the needs of each department and includes, trust, respect, transparency and leadership. These items surround the first primary theme of the human element in a circle, as they were the most important phrases as reiterated by the participants. Through the proper cultivation of the human element, the second theme identified is the cultural

ethos of the institution. The culture is shaped by the collective personalities of each member of the organization. Therefore, the culture is framed through the manner in which the human elements are fostered. Through the human elements identified, the cultural character gradually emerges. As identified in Figure 5, the aspects that influence the cultural identity of the organization include the political arena, legislative requirements, institutional history, policies and procedures, leadership style, as well as external factors such as the environment. These items circle the second theme of cultural ethos and serve as the basic foundation of an environment that exudes effective collaboration.

Through the human element and cultural ethos of the institution, the unification of people is able to develop. Without this third theme that emerged through this study, effective collaboration would be diminished. The items that encompass the unification of people as demonstrated in Figure 5 include the need for mutual benefit, purpose, value, trust, as well as the need to consider the relationship between the two departments as a marriage. An additional element that surrounds the unification of people is the impact that institutional history has on the ability to truly unify members of the organization.

Figure 5 demonstrates that once the three themes are in harmony, the primary reason for collaboration to occur is for students. In this model, students serve as the primary focus where all three themes are focused on student achievement. The barriers that encompass students include the time, cost, fear, and inability to unify people, lack of common goals, as well as the complexity and specialization of each division. Each of the arrows that begins at each of the three primary themes point in the directionality of students. The barriers previously mentioned surround the student, as these are the items identified from this study that negatively impact the

ability for effective collaborative engagements to transpire. It is the ability for institutions to break down these barriers that lead to successful collaborations that produce student achievement.



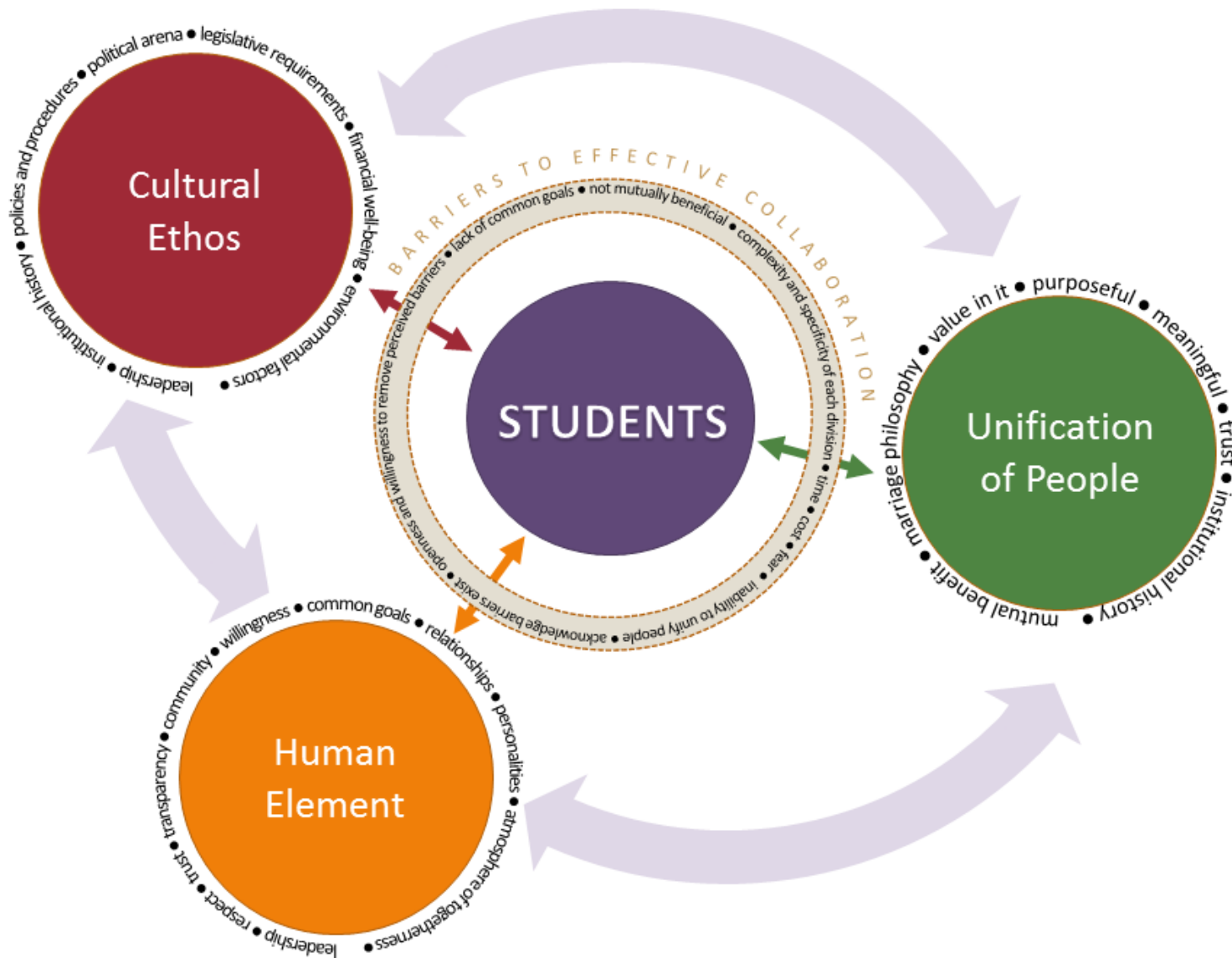


Figure 5: A new model of collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions

### Summary

This chapter identified the new model of collaboration through the utilization of Grounded Theoretical methodology. The main elements of this new model of collaboration resemble Hansen's theoretical framework with slight variances to his original concept as I have interpreted through my qualitative research. The main elements of the new model of collaboration are the importance of developing the cultural ethos of the institution, fostering the ability to unify all members of the organization, and instill upon all employees the necessary ingredients to develop and cultivate the human element with the primary focus on student achievement.

## **CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### Conclusion

Through this qualitative study, a current model of collaboration emerged through the application of Grounded Theoretical methodology. Although there is a myriad of conclusions that can be reached from this study, the primary areas of focus should be on the dramatic influence of institutional culture, leadership styles, common goals, and the cultivation of effective relationships. The aforementioned constructs serve as the essential ingredients for the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to develop and sustain authentic collaborations. Furthermore, it is important that effective collaborations are deliberate, purposeful, and that the foundation of trust and transparency are ingrained in all members of the organization. The willingness to collaborate for the betterment of the students and for the overall improvement of the institution served as the primary reasons why collaborative engagements occurred in the two divisions examined.

The barriers to effective collaboration identified by Hansen were supported through the interviews of the Vice Presidents in this study. Competing demands, increased accountability, legislative requirements, and the inability to find the time and resources necessary to remove the barriers to effective collaboration, continue to challenge the leaders in this study. In addition, there is not a training program, formula, or equation that can serve as the guideline to successful collaborative engagements. Varying personalities and perceptions of the institution are highly dependent upon the lens through which the employee is looking. A faculty member has the propensity to view the college through the lens of teaching and learning whereas a Student

Affairs professional will view the college through student engagement, student service, and completion. It is highly unlikely that one person in the institution can acquire a keen understanding of all aspects of both divisions due to the increased complexity of each division. However, through communication, personal relationships, and development of mutual goals, the barriers to effective collaboration can be removed.

With the increased emphasis placed on completion rates, graduation rates, job-placement rates, and student retention rates, institutions must ensure that all resources are dedicated to the cultivation of these goals. If divisions operate in isolation, there is increased chance that the efficacy of student success may be decreased. Furthermore, the student experiences the college as one entity, without varying notions that each department is independent of the other. Therefore, it is important that departments work in harmony with each other and that they focus their efforts on improving student learning both inside and outside the classroom simultaneously.

Institutional recommendations that can be made due to the conclusion of this study is to ensure that the leadership in all divisions exudes collaborative practices in their daily work. Communication and the development of trust with different divisions is paramount to the manner in which the institution is willing to work with each other. It is also recommended that each division attempt to remove the political and societal forces that continue to negatively influence the ease in which people work with others outside of their respective division. The oversimplification of the term “collaboration” has resulted in the false belief that effective collaboration is occurring. Disciplined collaboration entails the need to recognize when to collaborate and when not to collaborate (Hansen, 2009). If leaders in higher education continue to possess false beliefs pertaining to the efficacy of their collaborative engagements, the negative

effects will be felt by the student and ultimately by the institution. Through the deliberate willingness to develop successful partnerships focused on student success, the college will achieve the continued evolution of society and ensure their longevity.

### Future Research

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perception and construction of collaborative engagements through the lens of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs. The primary limitation associated with this study was that it focused on open access, state colleges located in the southern region of the United States. Therefore, it is recommended that this study be replicated at private, liberal arts institutions and traditional, four-year limited access colleges located in various regions of the United States. Additional clarity on the current status of collaboration between these two divisions should also be conducted at research one Universities, as preliminary research indicates a higher level of silo-activity occurring in these types of institutions (Lee, 2004). This concept was also strengthened in the personal interview with Karen, the Vice President of Academic Affairs at the second state college that participated in this study. Karen stated, “I do think that the idea of collaboration is really in some ways sector dependent and the dynamics of it would be much different for example in a research one University where silos is really the way they operate most of the time” (Karen, lines 524-527, p.10).

As a leader in higher education, and through this research study, it is also suggested that this study be replicated at state colleges who have cultivated strong external agreements with their local University college partner. Throughout the country, community and state colleges have implemented creative relationships that foster access and affordability to their local

University partner. Through articulation agreements, curriculum alignment strategies, and through the seamless integration of transfer services from one institution to the next, strong collaborative associations have been created. Thus, future research should be conducted with these institutions to determine if the strong external partnerships transcend through the internal departments.

### Researcher's Reflection

It is my intention that this study has provided a deeper insight to the current practice of collaboration between the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at state colleges located in the southern region of the United States. This was my first official experience conducting qualitative research and it truly has transformed the manner in which I construct and perceive partnerships with different academic divisions. Although the results of this study have demonstrated the importance of building and sustaining effective relationships, it also identified the fact that there is not a formula that a leader could follow to ensure effective collaboration. The ambiguity that pervades collaboration continues to elude many large-scale organizations. This ambiguity and differentiation in the understanding of authentic and genuine collaborations, has resulted in practitioners simply stating they are collaborating, for collaborations sake. When in reality, the actual art of collaboration is much more difficult than professionals would like to understand. The deliberateness and the willingness to collaborate effectively appears to be overshadowed by the societal dogma associated with not collaborating. I refer back to Karen's statement that "the cardinal sin, the mortal sin is to be claimed that you weren't collaborative" (Karen, lines 333-335, p.6). This statement supports the notion that the simple perception of being collaborative is all that is needed, without the actual practice of disciplined collaboration.

According to Hansen, the principles associated with disciplined collaboration must be cultivated through leadership.

Prior to conducting this research, I was unclear of what the results would indicate. This uncertainty was prevalent due to the societal belief that more collaboration is better than no collaboration. I was not expecting the thorough and robust analysis from the participants, as I once believed that they would respond with the common statements that they are highly collaborative. According to Hansen (2009), it is essential for organizations to properly determine when to collaborate and when not to collaborate. This is one of the essential parameters in disciplined collaboration. The results of this study revealed that the two divisions err on the side of inviting more people to the collaboration than they may need, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that the voice of each department was heard. Although this may be a good strategy to begin with, it also elicits frustration in participants in respect to the time and cost involved with simply being a non-active participant.

One of the overarching thematic underpinnings that was generated due to this study is the importance of the human element. Although the human elements that comprise the basic foundations on which collaboration is built, there is not enough effort placed on the cultivation of these elements. It is not due to the unwillingness of the people to develop and sustain these relationships, but rather due to the complexities and the daily responsibilities associated with working in higher education. The continual challenges plaguing higher education of reduced budgetary allocations, enrollment declines, increased accreditation requirements, increased federal and legislative mandates, coupled with the increased expectations of students has resulted in education professionals not being able to find the time needed to foster effective partnerships

with other divisions. Furthermore, the intricacies associated with each respective division has also resulted in a widening knowledge gap between members of these divisions.

Although the aforementioned challenges must be ameliorated for the betterment of the students, this study did reveal that there is a dedicated focus on the needs of the student. Often, when the research participants spoke of examples of their collaborative engagements, it was due to efforts to improve student success, student engagement, and ultimately, the student experience. It is with this positive notion that we formally conclude this study and turn our focus to the myriad of ways that we can collaborate with one another, to improve the educational experience for the most important person on campus, the student. Finally, although the differentiation of duties in the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs departments continues to impact the ability and ease of collaborative engagements, it is essential that we remember the following: “*We are more alike my friend than we are unlike. We are more alike my friend, than we are unlike*” (Anonymous).

#### Vignette, Revisited

This qualitative study has been a journey. A journey that began with the vignette of Joe and Laura experiencing the perplexities of collaboration. As the leaders of each of their division, they did not strategically develop the human elements of trust, communication, and identify common goals. This was due to their unwillingness to devote the time and energy needed to properly understand the complexities and intricacies of each other’s division. Although their failure to develop common goals with a mutual benefit was a result of competing demands, they believed that their working partnership was very positive. This false belief that collaboration



occurs naturally without the need to be deliberate, resulted in their project not meeting the standards of their college president.

Through this study, Joe and Laura have acquired a unique understanding of the time, cost, energy, and effort that is needed for their divisions to collaborate effectively. The differing perspectives that they had when they began their project, served as the primary barrier to them collaborating effectively. Additionally, one of the four common barriers to effective collaboration identified by Hansen served as the primary impetus for their challenges. Hansen (2009) identified the transfer barrier as one of the most prolific issues that must be addressed. The transfer barrier refers to the inability for each department to be able to effectively transfer the knowledge and expertise to the other division (Hansen, 2009). This was not due to their unwillingness to transfer knowledge, but rather, due to the difficulty in the transmission and understanding of the intricacies associated with each of their divisions.

In addition to the aforementioned challenges, Joe and Laura held false beliefs regarding the manner in which their two divisions practice authentic and genuine collaboration. These false beliefs are a result of the leadership of the institution and dramatically influenced by the culture of the institution. Joe and Laura's partnership began as a result of legislative acts that dramatically affected the state college system. In the personal interview conducted with research participant Amy, it was discovered that these legislative acts "set up barriers" (Amy, line 147, p.3).

Finally, due to this study, Joe and Laura have acquired a spirited understanding of the elements needed to decrease the barriers to effective collaboration. They will ensure that they are able to build the unification of people in each of their respective divisions through trust,

transparency, and open communication. In addition, they will develop and practice creative methodologies that improve the institutional culture's ability to gain a better understanding of each other's respective division. If they only knew of the traps and pitfalls of ineffective collaborative practices prior to their project beginning, the outcome may have been much more successful.

**APPENDIX A: E-MAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY**

E-mail: First Contact

Request to participate in doctoral research: COLLABORATION BETWEEN ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND STUDENT AFFAIRS AT PUBLIC STATE COLLEGES IN THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES

Dear Vice President of Academic Affairs/Vice President of Student Affairs:

My name is Geoffrey Fortunato and I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education and Policy Studies program at the University of Central Florida. My dissertation topic is: Collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at Public State Colleges in the Southern United States. Specifically, this study will focus on examining the perception of collaboration through the lens of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs at state colleges located in the southern United States.

I welcome your voluntary participation in this study, as it will positively contribute to the collective understanding of collaboration between these two divisions. You are receiving this e-mail as you currently serve as the Chief Academic Officer or Chief Student Affairs Officer at one of the institutions selected for this study. Your participation in this study will be confidential and your responses will be masked to ensure that you and your institution cannot be identified.

Please feel free to contact me at the number below with any questions regarding this request. Your participation is very important. Thank you in advance for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey Fortunato  
1-386-383-8384  
Doctoral Candidate  
Higher Education & Policy Studies Program  
University of Central Florida

## **APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT**

## **Participant Informed Consent Form**

**Title:** Collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at Public State Colleges in the Southern United States

Dear Vice President of Academic Affairs/ Vice President of Student Affairs:

Informed consent means that research participants need to have sufficient information about the project in which they are being asked to become involved so that they have a general understanding of the research before they volunteer to participate.

Your participation and completion of this informed consent is greatly appreciated, as the results will positively impact Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions. You are being invited to take part in personal interviews that will determine the current perception of collaboration between the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions. You have been selected as a possible participant as you currently serve as the Chief Academic Officer or Chief Student Affairs Officer at one of the institutions who have been selected for this study.

### **Purpose of this study:**

The purpose of this qualitative research study will be to explore the current perception, practice, or non-practice of collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions at state institutions located in the southern United States.

### **General Information Pertaining to this Study:**

- As principal researcher in this study, I will explain this process to you prior to the interview process taking place.
- By completing this informed consent, you are volunteering to participate in this study.
- You have the ability to not participate or not volunteer in this study.
- You have the ability to not answer any or all of the interview questions.
- You have the ability to retract your participation at any time during this process.
- Please ask any and all questions pertaining to this study at any time.
- Your participation will not be disclosed to anyone.
- Your institution that you work for will not be disclosed at any time during this process.
- Your name and your institution will be masked through the use of pseudonyms.



University of Central Florida IRB  
IRB NUMBER: SBE-16-12261  
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 05/17/2016

**Procedures:** Volunteers for this study will participate in personal interviews conducted by the researcher. It is estimated that the interview process will take 30 minutes to complete. The responses will be audio recorded and transcribed. Your name and institution will not be disclosed as pseudonyms will be utilized during the entire research study process.

**Location:** Personal interviews will be conducted at the campus location in which the participant is employed. Interviews will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for the participant and the researcher.

**Duration of the Interviews:** The interviews are estimated to take no longer than 30 minutes. The study is scheduled to take place in the spring and summer of 2016. The estimated dates are between April 1<sup>st</sup> and July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

**Risks/Benefits:** There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in this study. We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your participation. The results of this study may better inform college professionals in the state college system about the current status of collaboration between Academic and Student Affairs divisions.

**Compensation/payment:** There is no compensation for your participation in this study. Your participation is voluntary but will positively contribute to the Academy.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. All information will be handled in a strictly confidential manner, subject to the disclosure requirements of Florida Sunshine Laws, so that no one will be able to identify you when the results are recorded and reported. The personal data collected in this study will be limited to people who have a need to review this information. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of the respective colleges. In any report that is published or presented, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. All information is subject to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974, which is designed to protect the privacy of educational records.

**IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint:** Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to participate in the study or withdraw your consent at any time during the study. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with your institution or any of its representatives. If you decide to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences or affecting those relationships.



University of Central Florida IRB  
IRB NUMBER: SBE-16-12261  
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 05/17/2016

**Contact Information:** Questions or concerns about this study can be addressed to the researcher: Geoffrey C. Fortunato; Associate VP of Student Services; Seminole State College of Florida; [fortunatog@seminolestate.edu](mailto:fortunatog@seminolestate.edu); 407-708-2866; Doctoral student, University of Central Florida.

The protocol of the project was reviewed and approved by the UCF Institutional Review Board (IRB) to assure that the research is conducted in compliance with university, state, and federal regulations and guidelines governing research with human subjects. Questions or concerns about your rights in this project may be directed to the UCF Institutional Review Board, IRB Director,

Office of Research and Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826 (407-882-2276).

**Statement of Consent**

I have received a copy of this form to keep for my records.

I have read the information in this consent for and agree to participate in this study. I was given a chance to ask questions about this study and they have been answered. I understand the purpose of this study and my role as a volunteer participant.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant



From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2015 9:48 AM  
To: Geoffrey C Fortunato  
Subject: RE: Dissertation:

Geoff,

I'm happy to help you with your dissertation, but this is not my call or [REDACTED] call. Our institution has three roles: 1) support your research study; 2) provide you access to data and subjects; 3) ensure you observe IRB protocols with Seminole State data and subjects.

The UCF IRB reviews your study and ensures you are protecting the rights of individuals, mainly 1) ensuring that participants provide consent and are volunteers; 2) ensuring that data is protected and the confidentiality of participants is maintained.

Once UCF's IRB has that assurance and approves your study for data gathering, participants are just that – volunteers. They have the right to refuse and you have an obligation to respect their rights and privacy.

You have access to your participants, as do members of the public. You are allowed to approach them and request their participation in both your surveys and focus groups. Again, they can refuse. You do not need approval from each institution's IRB to approach participants and each institution should not be involved with reviewing and approving your study or protocols.

This is different if you were surveying students, employees, faculty, or some other group generally protected from public access. But, your participants are easily identified and easily accessed. They get requests like this routinely. There is no reason IRB reviews at each institution are needed.

You are welcomed to use this email and any of the language here with your dissertation, your committee, and UCF's IRB. Our documentation typically involves a letter of support, noting that we are aware of your study and will provide access, as appropriate, once the study is approved by UCF. But, it's not my place to document rationale for UCF's review and approval.

Let me know if we can help in any way – keep pluggin'!

From: Geoffrey C Fortunato  
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2015 8:31 AM  
To: [REDACTED]  
Subject: Dissertation:

Hi [REDACTED] Thank you for your assistance with my completion of dissertation. I worked diligently on it this weekend and made all of the recommended changes and updates. I met with Dr. Cintrón, Committee Chair last night and she mentioned that I will need to include the following in Chapter 3 methodology, to include with IRB submission:

An official letter on letterhead from you/IER, that details the rationale and reasons why it is not necessary to complete IRB approval for each of the 28 institutions. (Open access e-mail database via the CSA/CIA public List-serve,etc.). This will be included in the appendix section as one of many documents.

Would you be able to provide me with this document/letter for inclusion in my proposal? She indicated that UCF will require me to get IRB from all 28 colleges if I do not include detailed rationale about why it is not needed. Thank you in advance.

Geoffrey C. Fortunato

**APPENDIX C: REMINDER/FOLLOW UP E-MAIL**

Collaboration Research Study: COLLABORATION BETWEEN ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND  
STUDENT AFFAIRS AT PUBLIC STATE COLLEGES IN THE SOUTHERN UNITED  
STATES

Dear Vice President of Academic Affairs/Vice President of Student Affairs:

Two weeks ago, I sent you a request to participate in a research study regarding collaboration between the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs Divisions at state colleges located in the southern region of the United States. Currently, my records indicate that I have not received your confirmation of participation to date. Therefore, I am reaching out to you to reiterate how important your participation is in this study.

In an effort to identify the current status of collaboration through the lens of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs, your participation is needed. My goal is to receive your valuable feedback pertaining to collaboration at your respective institution.

I appreciate your consideration of participation in this valuable study.

Thank you,

Geoffrey C. Fortunato  
Doctoral Candidate  
Higher Education & Policy Studies Program  
University of Central Florida

## **APPENDIX D: THANK YOU E-MAIL TO PARTICIPANTS**

From: Geoffrey C Fortunato  
Sent: Thursday, June 30, 2016 5:31 PM  
To: Geoffrey C Fortunato  
Subject: Thank you: Doctoral Research Participant

Thank you for participating in my qualitative research study on collaboration between the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions. Your time and effort is greatly appreciated. The information you have provided will assist with the development of a new, current model of collaboration between these two divisions. It was a pleasure meeting with you. Thank you.

Geoffrey C. Fortunato  
Doctoral Candidate  
Higher Education & Policy Studies Program  
University of Central Florida

## **APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

A Qualitative Research Study: COLLABORATION BETWEEN ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND  
STUDENT AFFAIRS AT PUBLIC STATE COLLEGES IN THE SOUTHERN UNITED  
STATES

**Introduction:**

Thank you for your volunteer participation in this qualitative study. The purpose of this personal interview is to examine and explore the notion of collaboration between the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions within state colleges located in the southern United States. This session will be recorded and transcribed as indicated on your signed Informed Consent Form. Each of the questions below relate directly to collaboration between Academic and Student Affairs divisions **only**.

Prior to beginning the formal interview questions, please tell me a little about yourself. Please provide your name, title, institution in which you represent, years employed at the institution, and any additional information in which you would like to share. Your anonymity will be maintained throughout this process as your name and institution will be masked.

The following questions are grouped into three separate and distinct categories. Part 1 are questions pertaining to best practices, understanding /definition of collaboration, barriers to effective collaboration and collaborative successes. Part 2 relates to questions pertaining to application of collaboration. Part 3 are questions pertaining to evaluation and effectiveness of collaborative engagements between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.



**Part 1:** Questions pertaining to best practices, understanding /definition of collaboration, barriers to effective collaboration and collaborative successes.

| Primary Research Questions Related to Interview Protocol/Interview Questions | Interview Protocol   |
|--|--|
| RQ #1  | 1. Discuss your definition and understanding of collaboration.   |
| RQ #2  | 2. What factors lead to successful collaborative practices?  |
| RQ #1  | 3. What factors impact effective and successful collaborations?  |
| RQ #1  | 4. How is collaboration perceived within your division?  |
| RQ #2  | 5. Discuss your understanding of meaningful collaboration?   |
| RQ #1  | 6. Is there a commonly agreed upon definition and understanding of collaboration at the institution in which you are employed? |
| RQ #2  | 7. Discuss examples of collaborative initiatives.  |
| RQ #1  | 8. How would you define: “ <i>bad collaboration</i> ?”   |
| RQ #1  | 9. What factors do you attribute to the changing dynamic of collaboration?   |
| RQ #1; RQ #2   | 10. Openly discuss collaboration and share any additional information you would like regarding collaborative engagements.      |
| RQ #2  | 11. Have you worked in other divisions than what you currently work in? If so, please elaborate.                               |

**Part 2:** Questions pertaining to application of collaboration.

| <b>Primary Research Questions<br/>Related to Interview<br/>Protocol/Interview Questions</b> | <b>Interview Protocol</b>   |
|---|---|
| RQ #1; RQ #2  | Openly discuss the current role that collaboration plays at your institution.                       |
| RQ #1   | Discuss the process utilized to determine if collaboration should occur or not occur.               |
| RQ #2   | What efforts are taken to improve and sustain collaborative engagements?                            |
| RQ #2   | Discuss how collaboration is fostered, encouraged, and supported.                                   |
| RQ #2   | What process do you use to foster effective and successful working partnerships with each division? |
| RQ #1   | How does the specificity and the complexity of each division, impact collaboration?                 |
| RQ #2   | What process do you use to cultivate collaboration?   |

**Part 3:** Questions pertaining to evaluation and effectiveness of collaborative engagements between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.

| <b>Primary Research Questions Related to Interview Protocol/Interview Questions</b> | <b>Interview Protocol</b>  |
|---|--|
| RQ #1   | 1. How does institutional culture influence collaboration?   |
| RQ #2   | 2. In what ways is collaboration assessed and measured?  |
| RQ #1   | 3. How does leadership style impact collaboration at your institution?<br>a. How do you describe your leadership style?  |
| RQ #2   | 4. Let me show you a model regarding collaboration as developed by Morton Hansen. Openly discuss your thoughts pertaining to this model.<br>a. How do you relate to this model of collaboration? |
| RQ #1   | 5. What processes do you use to remove perceived barriers to effective collaboration?  |

*Thank you for your participation today. It is greatly appreciated. Please let me know if you would like a copy of the final report emailed to you upon completion.*

**APPENDIX F: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO UTILIZE FIGURE 1**

From: Morten Hansen  
Sent: Wednesday, April 06, 2016 4:44 PM  
To: Geoffrey C Fortunato  
Subject: Re: Collaboration Figure: Utilization Permission

Dear Geoffrey;  
Many thanks for your inquiry, and sounds like you're pursuing some real interesting work.  
Yes you may use that figure. Best of luck!

Best regards, Morten

---

Morten T. Hansen  
Professor | UC Berkeley  
Co-Author | Great By Choice  
Author | Collaboration

On Apr 6, 2016, at 1:16 PM, Geoffrey C Fortunato wrote:

Dr. Hansen:

I am a Doctoral student at the University of Central Florida in the Higher Education and Policy Studies Program. I have been studying your excellent work on Collaboration and I am writing to seek your permission to utilize your figure/formula for determining if collaboration should occur. The title of my dissertation is: Collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at Public State College in the Southern United States. Your visual depiction of when collaboration should occur would fit nicely in my dissertation. I humbly request your approval to utilize the figure below with the assurance of proper citations and credits as required by APA standards. I look forward to hearing from you. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide any additional information pertaining to this request. Thank you in advance for your consideration. I admire your work.

Figure 1: Hansen's formula for determining if collaboration should occur:

Adapted from Hansen, M.T. (2009). Collaboration: how leaders avoid the traps, create unity, and reap big results. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press. Permission to utilize this figure is being made to Morton Hansen as indicated in Appendix F.

Geoffrey C. Fortunato  
Doctoral Candidate  
Higher Education & Policy Studies Program  
University of Central Florida

## **APPENDIX G: DATA REDUCTION PROCESS**

Competes demands fusion  
 obstacles  
 III

Respect  
 Trust  
 Onboarding +  
 Embedded things endship  
 Manning  
 Physical Property + location  
 Students first focus.  
 Informal + Informal Areas + Measure.  
 An Emotional experience  
 Feelings willingness  
 Leadership  
 Personality Traits  
 Willingness to collaborate  
 Deliberate + purposeful  
 Culture  
 Top Down  
 Mutual Benefit  
 Common Goal  
 Frequency of Communication + Contact  
 Collaborator to ensure retention + completion  
 Relationships  
 Leaders that believe in the work  
 Something that everyone is striving for  
 Leadership really important  
 Common goal based on respect  
 Winging it

Concurrent parties  
 Dev. Legislation  
 Extreme Goals  
 correct  
 Break  
 Category Recognition  
 Survival Mode  
 Although my group is about  
 Collaboration, as Extra  
 Cash

demands +  
 Time,  
 discussion  
 Team  
 Deliberate focus.  
 Structural Issues  
 interpersonal issues  
 indoctrinate  
 culture of Collaboration  
 Institutional culture  
 Respect.  
 Goals  
 Joint Committee  
 Common Goal.  
 General.  
 Complex set up basis  
 Cultural + respect  
 Leadership  
 Cultural change  
 Collaboration as a result.  
 Passions  
 Understand Important  
 deeply collaborator  
 culture  
 deliberate process  
 Common Purpose

## **APPENDIX H: NVIVO WORD FREQUENCY ANALYSIS**



| Word          | Length | Count | Weighted Percentage (%) |
|---------------|--------|-------|-------------------------|
| know          | 4      | 465   | 2.30                    |
| think         | 5      | 363   | 1.79                    |
| president     | 9      | 361   | 1.79                    |
| collaboration | 13     | 354   | 1.75                    |
| vice          | 4      | 331   | 1.64                    |
| moderator     | 9      | 272   | 1.35                    |
| affairs       | 7      | 206   | 1.02                    |
| student       | 7      | 196   | 0.97                    |
| like          | 4      | 195   | 0.96                    |
| people        | 6      | 191   | 0.94                    |
| just          | 4      | 188   | 0.93                    |
| one           | 3      | 179   | 0.89                    |
| okay          | 4      | 143   | 0.71                    |
| academic      | 8      | 137   | 0.68                    |
| things        | 6      | 130   | 0.64                    |
| work          | 4      | 128   | 0.63                    |
| faculty       | 7      | 121   | 0.60                    |
| well          | 4      | 121   | 0.60                    |
| really        | 6      | 111   | 0.55                    |
| collaborative | 13     | 105   | 0.52                    |
| part          | 4      | 105   | 0.52                    |
| college       | 7      | 102   | 0.50                    |
| process       | 7      | 100   | 0.49                    |
| get           | 3      | 99    | 0.49                    |
| together      | 8      | 90    | 0.45                    |
| gonna         | 5      | 86    | 0.43                    |
| need          | 4      | 84    | 0.42                    |
| institution   | 11     | 82    | 0.41                    |
| thank         | 5      | 82    | 0.41                    |
| leadership    | 10     | 81    | 0.40                    |
| time          | 4      | 76    | 0.38                    |
| way           | 3      | 73    | 0.36                    |
| good          | 4      | 71    | 0.35                    |
| students      | 8      | 71    | 0.35                    |
| discuss       | 7      | 70    | 0.35                    |
| going         | 5      | 70    | 0.35                    |
| make          | 4      | 69    | 0.34                    |
| mean          | 4      | 66    | 0.33                    |
| two           | 3      | 66    | 0.33                    |

**APPENDIX I: IRB HUMAN SUBJECTS PERMISSION LETTER**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

## Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Geoffrey C. Fortunato**

Date: **May 17, 2016**

Dear Researcher:

On 05/17/2016, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination  
Project Title: COLLABORATION BETWEEN ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND STUDENT AFFAIRS AT PUBLIC STATE COLLEGES IN THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES.  
Investigator: Geoffrey C Fortunato  
IRB Number: SBE-16-12261  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewska, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Joanne Muratori'.

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 05/17/2016 01:49:01 PM EDT

IRB Manager

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