

OREGON PROMISE: A LOOK AT INSTITUTIONS AND DECISIONS MADE AS A
RESULT OF OREGON PROMISE POLICY

by

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ABSTRACT

How do free college initiatives, such as the Oregon Promise, impact decision-making at mid-sized community colleges? How have community colleges leveraged free college initiatives to increase and provide systemic support to vulnerable students? The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand the decision-making process as expressed by community college leadership and to explore the process of change. The study examined four mid-sized Oregon community colleges which constituted the entire population of mid-sized community colleges per the Carnegie classification system of size, in the state of Oregon. The participants in the study included seasoned Vice Presidents whose primary role was to implement initiatives, policies, procedures and oversee student success at their campus. The information provided serves to inform change in higher education. Attention was given to Neo-Institutionalism and Tierney's Decision-making theories as well as social-constructionist and critical social frameworks. The results indicate that system change is far more difficult than one might imagine given the multiple stakeholders, vision of shared governance, and competing interests. This study concludes with suggestions for implementing system change and the need for further research.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

“.. because in the United States of America, no one should go broke because they chose to go to college. - President Barack Obama, State of the Union Address, January 27, 2010.”

In 1983 the National Commission on Excellence in Education published the famous document entitled *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983). This controversial report essentially declared war on the educational system in the United States with the purpose of advancing among other agendas, college education for all students regardless of race, class or economic status. Citing the Gallup Poll (1982) *Public Attitudes Toward the Public Schools*, this document declared that people are steadfast in their belief that a college education is essential for a strong and healthy national identity. In 2006, the Spellings report noted that it was time to be frank about the fact that higher education was not realizing its potential and was falling far short in the areas of access, cost and affordability, learning, transparency, accountability and innovation. In response to *A Nation at Risk* and subsequent work, President Obama introduced *America's College Promise* (2015) an initiative designed to deliver two years of free college to all Americans backed by 100 million to 60 billion dollars in tuition grant monies over the next ten years.

Support for free college is growing as the United States falls further behind other industrialized countries in college graduates and performance in science, technology,

engineering and math (Office of the President, 2015). Public support for college attendance, though not without debate, is also growing as results indicate that a college degree or certificate results in higher wages across a lifetime and additional societal benefits (CSSE, 2014). Bachelor degree recipients have annual wages that are 134% higher and lifetime earnings that total more than \$625,000 than comparable high school graduates that never attend college (Trostel, 2012). The benefits of a college education exceed just wages. Those with bachelor's degrees are more likely to have a retirement plan, medical insurance, better health, longer life expectancy, occupational prestige, job safety and better employment in general (Trostel, 2012). Perhaps the most important benefit though can be measured in terms of happiness. Those with college degrees report a higher and more significant level of happiness than those without (Trostel, 2012). Economically those with college educations are more likely to contribute to society, pay higher taxes and commit less crime than those without (Mayhew, Rockenbach, Bowman, Seifert and Wolniak, 2016). College educated individuals are more likely to volunteer, contribute to charitable causes, vote and participate in community activities (Mayhew, et.al, 2016; Trostel, 2012). Despite the multiple benefits, the Spellings Report indicates that fewer Americans are acquiring college educations and that the American economy is suffering as a result (Spellings, 2006). Knowing this, it appears crucial that America prioritize higher education and assist those who can least afford it so that they too can access the benefits of a college education.

In response to the need to provide affordable attainable education, Tennessee, Oregon, West Virginia, Rhode Island, Minnesota, Kentucky, Arkansas, Nevada, New

York and Chicago have launched free two-year college programs with many states and cities in the proposal process (EAB, 2016a). While programs for free college are growing, there has been little research on which students will take advantage of the free college opportunity. Historically moves towards providing access for the masses have been met with varying levels of success and free college may be no different. Early results indicate that free college may not bring in *new* students but instead goes to students who would have attended college anyway. The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS) has stated that free college may be a missed opportunity to target students who truly need aid the most (Cochrane, 2017). This is compounded by concerns that when free college programs bring in students from low socio-economic backgrounds they do not support them through retention and completion, leaving them no better off than when they started.

Increasingly supportive measures are being piloted to retain vulnerable students. The reason for implementing supportive interventions, is that nationwide only 34% of all community college students graduate. Further, only 30-33% of students who start at community colleges graduate with an associate's degree within three years (Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins, 2015). Only 38% of students who enter occupational certificate programs complete and 58% of those who enroll in an occupational Associates degree program fail to obtain a degree of any type within six years (AACC, 2015). The numbers are even more dismal for minority students. Only 19.2% of LatinX students, between the ages of 25 and 34, earned an Associate degree or higher which is less than the national average of 41.1% (AACC, 2015). In terms of readiness, 60% of community college

students end up in developmental education and only 13.1% of students in developmental education will finish a certificate within 18 months (AACC, 2015). In Oregon, statistics are even more grim. In 2015 only 24% of community college students who started school in 2007-2008 completed a degree within seven years (Johnson, 2015). Further, Oregon ranked 32nd out of 36 states for community college completion (Johnson, 2015). The situation is so dire that six major organizations including the American Association of Community Colleges, Association of Community College Trustees, the Center for Community College Student Engagement, League for Innovation in the Community College, the National Institute for Staff and Organizational development and Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society have joined a pact to increase community college completion 50% by 2020 (AACC, 2015). Will college affordability (free college) impact degree completion? Early studies suggest that free college increases rates of college application and college going behavior, but retention and completion is not the same as college access. This has not stopped states from adopting free college programs. In Oregon, the legislature has responded with the Oregon Promise initiative to address the issues of college affordability and college support for students.

SB 81-The Oregon Promise

Senate Bill 81 (2015), also known as the Oregon Promise, was passed by the legislature in July of 2015. The bill provides a \$10M appropriation in the form of tuition grants for students who; have been an Oregon resident for at least 12 months prior to enrolling in community college, received an Oregon high school diploma or GED, or earned a cumulative 2.5+ high school GPA (or passed all GED tests with minimum score

of 150) within six months of graduation/completion. Students must enroll in an Oregon community college and have completed the FASFA and accepted all state and federal grant monies offered to qualify. Students are required to enroll into programs that result in an Associate degree, a state approved one-year general education curriculum for transfer students (known as the OTM, or Oregon Transfer Module) or a program that results in a career and technical education certificate or degree. Oregon Promise students are eligible for a second year of tuition grant funding if they maintain a 2.5+ GPA, make satisfactory academic progress, complete a FASFA each year and enroll at least half-time each term for three consecutive terms in the academic year (HECC, 2015). Students are not eligible if they have completed more than 90 credit hours or a previous certificate/degree (HECC, 2015).

The Oregon Promise grant is designed to work hand in hand with federal Pell grants and the Oregon Opportunity Grant as a payer of last resort. Traditionally “last-dollar” programs which require students to draw upon other sources of aid first do not have the potential of reducing associated costs such as transportation, childcare, housing or books. The Oregon Promise is somewhat unique in that students whose tuition is completely covered by the Pell or Oregon Opportunity Grants (OOG) still receive the minimum award of \$1,000 for educational expenses including transportation, books and living expenses (pro-rated by attendance over the course of an academic year) much like a “first-dollar” award program. However, students who do not qualify for full Pell or OOG may receive the maximum grant amount which is approximately \$3,397 for full time students enrolled in eligible classes, for the complete academic year. Grant

recipients are required to pay \$50 per term as a copayment. The Oregon Promise in conjunction with state and federal grants, is expected to pay the entire tuition of an Oregon community college for the neediest students and cover a fair amount for students from mid to high socio-economic households (HECC, 2015). Some 10,379 Oregon students applied for the Oregon Promise in 2016-2017 and those students started their first term of enrollment in Fall of 2016. Of those students 25% were expected to receive the full Pell award, 12% a moderate Pell award, 9.7% a small Pell award and 53.3% did not qualify for any Pell award based upon expected family income contributions (HECC, 2015).

In 2017, the Oregon legislature funded the Oregon Promise for an additional biennium. However, rather than funding the entire bill the legislature fell short of the needed amount by an expected 8 million dollars. Knowing that it would not fund the entire second round of the Oregon Promise, they granted the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) the authority to place stipulations on eligibility. The HECC has elected to place income stipulations on the Promise and students with the highest Estimated Family Contributions (EFC) will no longer be eligible (HECC, 2017). In exchange, they loosened the eligibility requirements so that those students who have been out of high school for more than six months and that can prove financial hardship or military service may now qualify. In addition, they rolled the \$50 co-pay into the award so it does not have to be paid separately by students. The Promise funding is expected to continue under these new stipulations into future state budgets (HECC, 2017).

The Oregon Promise grant program overseen by the Higher Education Coordination Commission's Office of Student Access and Completion (HECC) in cooperation with the Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development or CCWD, mandated that all 17 of Oregon's community colleges implement interventions to support Oregon Promise students (HECC, 2015). House Bill 4076 provided \$82,990 to each community college to enact, "... interventions/supports that are deep and impactful, even if that means the program is not able to fund this activity for every Oregon Promise student. (HECC, 2015)." House Bill 4076 was a one-time allotment and was not funded in the subsequent biennial budget. Specific strategies were outlined after the \$82k was allotted and in many cases spent. The additional strategies stated that the HB 4076 monies were to be used to develop and maintain a first-year experience, fund a student success team and to provide professional development to staff and faculty that would result in intentional strategic intervention to Oregon Promise students (HECC, 2017a). Almost 60% of these funds were spent on personnel. With the funding non-renewed, community colleges were left holding the bill for personnel to support developed initiatives without any financial resources to do so, resulting in an additional under-funded mandate.

If free college programs increase the number of educated Americans particularly Americans from low socio-economic positions, they further the access and innovation goals outlined in the Spellings Report (2006). However, the Oregon free college initiatives do not adequately address the educational supports and andragogy that must be developed to facilitate the success, retention and completion of these vulnerable students.

In the context of supporting college access for all Americans regardless of ability to pay, how do colleges help students retain and complete their degrees? How do colleges support vulnerable students particularly those with challenges that accompany a low socio-economic status, retain and complete in a time of resource scarcity? How do decision makers decide which success strategies to use and why? Community colleges as open access institutions desire to support and change the lives of students. However, how this is accomplished at a governance level is unknown. This research is of vital importance, as without it programs are created with best guesses and little grounded evidence wasting valuable resources including time, energy and monies.

Statement of Problem

A college education opens the door for personal, social, economic and societal benefits (NCEE, 1983; Nation at Risk, 2015). College benefits are so valuable that the government has invested enormous financial resources into making college accessible to all, regardless of ability to pay. While this is an admirable step, the result is often students who come to college unprepared for the rigor and demands required to succeed and complete college (Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins, 2015). Current systems, while focused on getting students in the door, often fail to support these students once they are admitted, leading to dwindling trust by both the government and the public (Bailey, Jaggars and Jenkins, 2015).

Community colleges nationally are struggling with retaining, supporting and completing students, particularly vulnerable student populations. According to the Hechinger Report (2015), the average community college graduation rate is around 30-

39% (Kolodner, 2015). Community colleges are also struggling with the mandates and boundaries placed on them by governmental policy (i.e. HB 4076). An additional pressure and it is not a small one, is public accountability and a demand for results such as living wage jobs, a boost in the national economy and the levels of documented credentials obtained by Americans (Spelling, 2006). How to balance this myriad of competing interests successfully is virtually unstudied. This research examines the decision-making process that schools undertake to balance student success and supports, while attempting to achieve acceptable political outcomes (e.g. students supports designed to help students retain and complete). This research is of vital importance as more institutions face uncharted waters without a navigational map.

The overarching goal of this instrumental case study is to identify, understand, illustrate and co-construct the organizational decision-making processes made by leadership of medium sized community colleges in response to the Oregon Promise policy and mandates. Attention is paid to organizational motivation, shared meaning and structures as decision makers seek to increase the access and success of vulnerable student populations. This case study explains how community colleges in Oregon have adjusted to meet the demands (e.g. student needs, public accountability and government funding) of Oregon Promise. Drawing upon institutional and decision-making theories this instrumental case study examines how in times of scarce resources and struggling students, Oregon community colleges decide upon and implement support strategies for Oregon Promise students with the goal of increasing student success. The case study

methodology allows for results to be described, understood and for lessons to be generated by means of practical problem solving that can be of use to the larger field.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to identify how four mid-sized Oregon community colleges via their leadership make decisions in response to Oregon Promise policy with the overall goal of providing support to students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The Oregon Promise provides boundaries and opportunities for looking at the decision-making process. The difficulties in handling mandates with limited resources are explored as is the ability to assist vulnerable students to retain and complete successfully.

This case study also considers the size of the institution as an additional boundary. Mid-sized institutions were purposefully selected for study because of the optimal conditions they presented. Small institutions were not as impacted by the Oregon Promise as they saw few additional students (HECC, 2017). For some smaller institutions, the additional funds were an increase to their budget in that the few additional students required little in financial support or systemic change. Larger institutions could absorb the students into current well established systems. The largest institution also received four times the HB 4076 funding in comparison to other two year institutions (HECC, 2017). Medium sized institutions struggled because there was the potential for an increase in students and not enough funding to support institutional change. These conditions presented optimal conditions for an instrumental case study.

Utilizing both a social critical lens and a social constructionist approach, meaning about decision-making and supporting vulnerable student populations was co-constructed with participants through in-depth interviews and collaborative facilitated discussions. Results were interpreted using both Neo-Institutional and Tierney's cultural decision-making theory. Neo-institutional theory allowed for a look at the external factors impacting community colleges, while cultural decision-making looked at internal factors. Together they allowed for a more comprehensive look at decision-making in response to under-funded mandates at the community college level.

Guiding Research Questions

Yin (2009) states that case study questions should be focused on “how” and “why” questions as these allow for explanations that can best be addressed by the case study methodology. The questions for this case study are:

- 1) *How has the Oregon Promise policy impacted mid-sized Oregon community colleges?*
- 2) *What interventions have colleges selected to address the needs of Oregon Promise students? Why?*
- 3) *How have colleges brought to bear institution decision-making in selecting the interventions developed to address stipulations of the Oregon Promise?*

Theoretical Paradigm

Some critics of qualitative research have suggested that starting with theory in advance of the research design may lead to bias. However, Yin (2009) suggests that

starting with a test theory creates a vehicle or framework for designing the case study. Instead of constraining the development of new theory, starting with theoretical premises aids in concept development, research study design and data collection. Yin (2009) continues that the starting theoretical framework becomes the vehicle for generalizing conclusions. The formal theoretical paradigms for this study include Neo-Institutional theory and Tierney's cultural decision-making theory.

Researchers tend to agree that higher education is a system or an organized whole made up of sub-systems defined by boundaries (Birnbaum, 1988). Where they disagree is whether the system should be studied from the top down or bottom up perspective. By utilizing both Neo-Institutional theory and Tierney's cultural decision-making theory, this study allows for both top down and bottoms up (macro and micro) analysis. Some researchers have argued that looking at individual pieces of the whole is not recommended as the whole can only be understood by the compilation of the parts. However, more recent researchers have argued that looking at the pieces and whole simultaneously is useful for generalizing findings and explaining the socially constructed reality (Kezar, 2012). This research looks at decision-making via leadership and compares that to institutional decisions and results of decision-making (change) across schools. Looking at the roles, functions and systemic impact provides an in-depth explanation that benefits the field and fills important gaps in the literature.

Neo-Institutional Theory

“American colleges and universities are the most paradoxical of organizations. On the one hand, it has been said that they constitute one of the largest industries in the

nation but are among the least businesslike and well managed of all organizations.” (Birnbaum, 1988). How then do they operate and become more or less effective? Higher education changes and decision-making occur differently than other social institutions. One of the primary differences between higher education and other industry is the governance structure. Academia is proud of its history of shared governance and indeed, higher education institutions are made up of a variety of stakeholders all holding pieces of control. This diffusion and accepted practice leads to stability (Meyer, 2007). Decisions made by the ascribed leadership continue to be made based upon expediency, moral obligation or simply because the decision maker cannot imagine an alternative, which limits innovation and progress (Meyer, 2007).

Higher education draws upon evolutionary, social and cognitive theories to explain operations (Kezar, 2014). Decisions are made and processes change in reaction to the inter-play between external forces and internal culture, values and beliefs. Societal goals and human agency are both important factors in higher education (Kezar, 2014). The cultural pieces (e.g. faculty, students, employees, governance groups, funding structures) remain the vehicles for which change is lifted into practice and institutionalized- or not. Higher education has not seen revolutionary change, which is part of the argument made by the Spelling report (2006) and related research. The government and public, both actors and barriers, are asking for change (Meyer, 2007). Institutionalizing change, however, is not so simple.

Neo-Institutional theory recognizes that the nation, state and economy (macro systems) all shape higher education but also allows for micro change agents (Gumport,

1993; Kezar, 2014). The Oregon Promise brings external pressure and mandates to bear on Oregon community colleges and in turn asks for changes in practice that are influenced, defined and supported by institutional culture. Traditionally, institutions of higher education lean towards the status quo to maintain legitimacy and support (Kezar, 2014). When pressure to change builds momentum, institutions (may) make decisions that may result in new schemas and norms (Kezar, 2014; Powell and DiMaggio, 1983). A side effect of Neo-Institutional theory and external pressure is that institutions gradually exhibit isomorphism (coercive, mimetic and normative pressures) and institutional drift occurs as academic capitalism increases (Kezar, 2014; Morpew, 2009; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004). What decisions Oregon community colleges make in response to external impacts are analyzed through the lens of Neo-Institutional theory and resulting change is observed, discussed and co-constructed for meaning.

A major criticism of the Neo-Institutional theory is that it is hard to document, tends to maintain a static view that does not recognize flux and it acknowledges that cases may fall outside the described paradigm (Kezar, 2014). Neo-Institutional theory does however recognize that decisions may be made in response to field best practices and that decisions should be, can only be, taken slowly as character changes with the institution impacting culture and mission (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Kezar, 2014). How community colleges recognize these factors in response to mandated change are investigated and explained by this research providing valuable information for other institutions in similar situations.

Tierney's Decision-making

“Higher education is undergoing as significant a period of turbulence and innovation as at any time in the last sixty years.” (Tierney, 2008, p.3). According to Tierney (2008) educational institutions are impacted by external forces. Failure to identify external forces adequately leads to systemic failure. Institutions are more than the sum of their parts. They are their parts, the external forces, the interpretation of external forces and the attention paid to both internal and external forces (Tierney, 2008). Tierney's work is concerned with how culture is created, how culture can move an institution forward and how cultures fail (Tierney, 2008).

At the heart of institutional decision-making is governance. Governance is, “... the process designed to achieve outcomes.” (Tierney, 2008, p. 135). This is important because it means that institutional decision-making and governance are socially constructed and a cultural phenomenon. Tierney (2008) proposes seven ways to examine governance and decision making including (a) formal leadership (e.g. President and Vice Presidents), (b) contradictions within the culture, (c) identity (e.g. mission, core values, consistency), (d) multiple problems and multiple solutions, (e) fleeting solutions and unlikely consequences, (f) solutions that undermine values and (g) internal dynamics such as the operating culture. Culture in this definition is not something that exists “out there”. Instead it is mutually dependent and defined within the institutional context. Culture is not a noun but a verb as it consists of many voices (both the same and different) working on and with each other through the process of socialization to create, acquire and transfer knowledge (Kezar, 2012). Higher educational organizational culture is constantly moving and modifying as people utilize similarities, creativity and

differences to determine what could be. For this research project, Tierney's (2008) theory of organizational decision-making in higher education, which is both socially constructed and a critical analysis, is used to understand results.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of all qualitative research is to understand the phenomena being explored (Creswell, 2007). This instrumental case study was designed to better understand the decisions, and decision-making, made to support the access, retention and completion of all students. Because there is not a huge existing body of research on the impacts of free college initiatives, qualitative inquiry allows for exploration, explanation, shared development of constructs and deeper understandings that can then be explored in depth. Case study was selected because the Oregon Promise provides boundaries and will allow drilling down into commonalities and differences as each school responds to the same specific set of demands. Tierney (2008) argues that institutions are individual cultures where reality is constructed and enacted, but that culture can be transcended. This is an important point, as it is my hope to distill this micro culture up to the macro and determine if commonalities do exist across institutional cultures that can benefit other higher educational cultures in further development. Commonalities can reveal important snap-shots, concerns and trends (Merriam, 1998). Comparisons allow for generalities to emerge and provide explanations of relevance (Merriam, 1998). There is precedence for using case study methodology in this manner. Dowd (2003) utilized case study to compare two state college systems with success.

This research is designed to understand reality as constructed by the participants of the study (ontological), get as close to the topic as possible for shared understanding (epistemological), openly discuss values that shape the narrative (axiological), use the language of qualitative inquiry (rhetorical) and use an inductive logic model (methodological). Two over-arching interpretive frameworks: social constructionism and critical social theory drive this work. The conceptual framework outlined in Figure 1 (pg. 19) illustrates how the conceptual design of this research supports the study. Neo-Institutionalism and decision-making theory allow for a macro and micro analysis that inform how the whole operates and functions. Neo-Institutional theory explains that external pressures act upon the internal culture to create change in response to decision-making. In exchange the culture, values and beliefs change in accordance with decision-making via change agents (macro-actors). This work is grounded in two specific philosophical paradigms; social constructionism and critical social theory.

Social constructionism and critical social theory both maintain that knowledge is socially constructed and that meaning is derived from symbolic interactions (Tierney, 2008). Both theoretical perspectives also recognize the knowledge and the knower are influenced by the social, cultural and political context within which they operate. Social constructionism theory is used to analyze how exchanges occurred, how interventions were identified and what dialogue, negotiation, occurred in the process of this decision-making. Leadership interviews with an emphasis on the social exchanges that took place within the institutional context as decisions occurred, are examined. How community

colleges made decisions about and selected specific interventions fits with social constructionism and is supported by this theoretical framework.

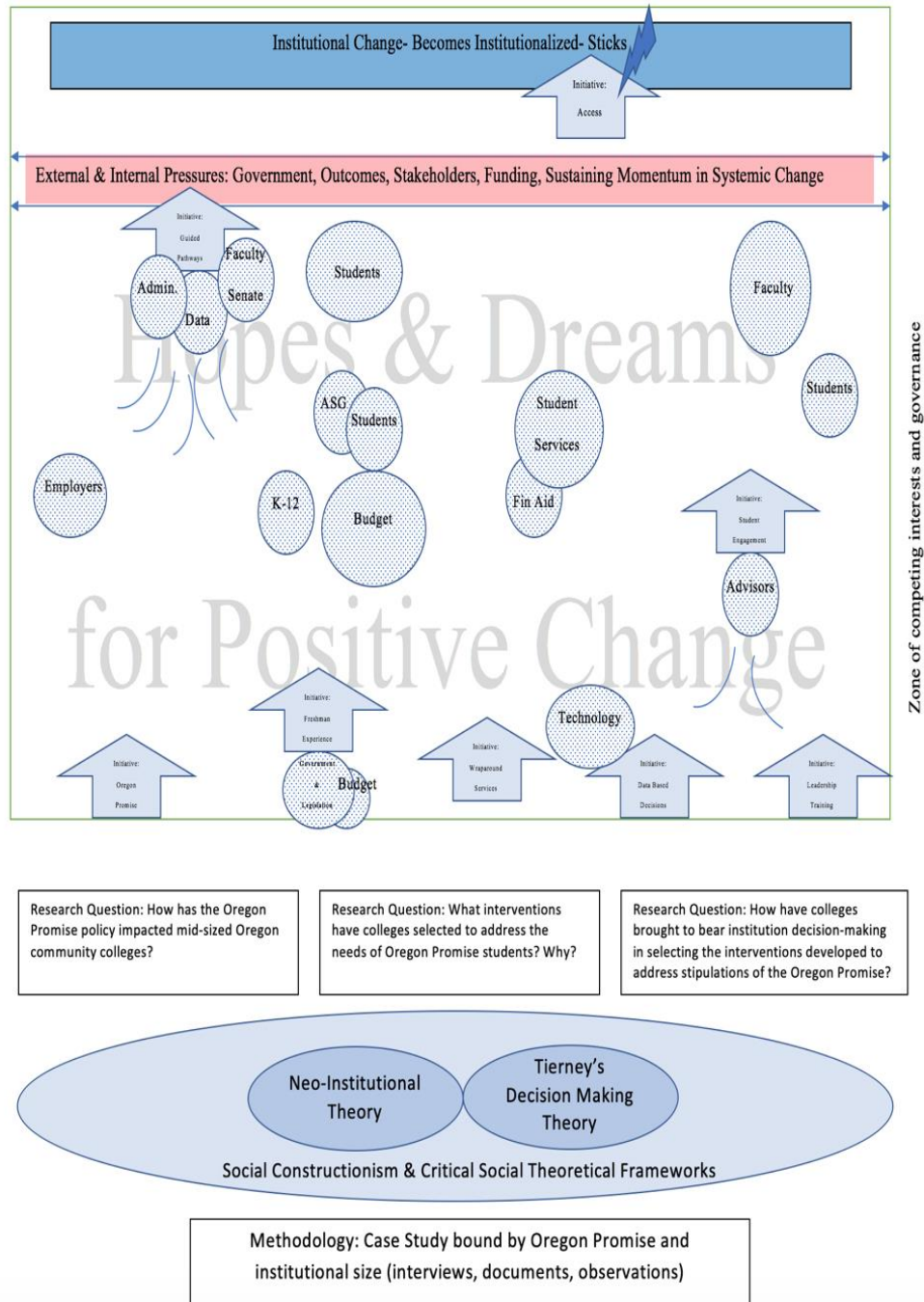
At the same time, the decisions and strategies that resulted from these exchanges are examined through the lens of critical social theory (Tierney, 2008). Specifically, what interventions and why the colleges selected specific interventions are looked at through the lens of critical social theory. It was also crucial to examine how the decision-making led to change or did not lead to change, based upon cultural factors including system potential for change. Critical social theory is used to understand how the decisions relate to field best practices that support vulnerable students. College administrators who hold positions of authority and power often make and own decisions in higher education (Tierney, 2008). How those in power make decisions and create systems for vulnerable populations in comparison to best practice and in the face of scarce resources fits within the greater theoretical framework of critical social theory and social constructionism. Whether these decisions result in change is informed by Neo-Institutional and Tierney's decision-making theory. This study benefits from the inclusion of both critical social theory and social constructionism theory as utilizing the two together for analysis lends credibility and structure to the study.

Research Design

This instrumental case study examines how all four of Oregon's mid-sized community colleges make decisions based upon mandates of the Oregon Promise legislation. Utilizing in-depth interviews of decision makers and by analyzing results via theory, the goal of this research is to provide valuable insight into what can be done and

how the decision-making process occurs at community colleges in the face of scarce resources. This study examines how the external influence of the Oregon Promise pressures colleges to make change and how the internal culture responds to that pressure. Specifically, how decisions that influence student support emerge from the collision of forces. This study recognizes that other areas and types of decisions or processes may emerge. These are explored and add to the constructed understanding. Finally, findings are written up using thick rich description that informs the greater body of literature and provides important information for community college operations, legislatures and institutional decision makers.

Figure 1. Conceptual Map



Operational Definitions

As mentioned previously, several states have enacted varying free college promises with many other cities, counties, districts and schools following suit even as this is being written. The scope of potential impact is enormous. To make this research project manageable, constructs were defined in a way that limits or specifies what was examined. This research was limited by the construct definitions that follow. The following definitions operationalize major terms in the present study.

1. *Oregon Promise students. This research is specifically concerned with students who have applied for Oregon Promise dollars (identified by a specific application furnished to community colleges and awarded by the schools to the students for registration). To date this includes just over ten thousand Oregon resident college students.*
2. *Oregon Promise schools. For this research study, free college programs or promise programs were limited to the 17 community colleges impacted by the Oregon Promise policy.*
3. *College Leadership. Defined as campus decision makers, college leadership is typically defined as the President and their direct reports including the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Student Affairs. Each campus was asked if there were other individuals who were responsible for the decision-making surrounding the Oregon Promise initiative and if so these individuals or groups were asked to participate. This study recognizes that though change and culture occurs through shared governance, certain entities are ultimately*

responsible for the decisions and policies that a school enacts. This study is interested in how those responsible by title and position of authority manage decision-making.

4. *Mid-Sized (Medium) Oregon Community Colleges. Mid-sized community colleges are defined using the Carnegie classification for identification of institutional size in Oregon. This practice has been utilized successfully in the literature (Dowd, 2003). The justification for using this size classification is that smaller colleges did not experience enough Oregon Promise students to impact systems or practices. Larger schools absorbed students with little impact to the system. Mid-sized institutions are more precarious in that they are potentially more significantly impacted by both student numbers and budget fluctuations (Amah and Nwuche, 2013).*
5. *External forces. External forces are defined as those forces outside of the institution that become stakeholders that impact college decision-making and operations. Neo-Institutional and decision-making theories suggest that political pressures, policies and government mandates, economic pressure and accountability are external forces.*
6. *Internal forces. Internal forces as suggested by Tierney's organizational decision-making theory (2008) include the local mission, values, beliefs and institutional culture. Internal forces interact with the external forces as stakeholder actors and in response to decision-making, may enact change.*

7. *Decision-making. Decision-making is defined by Tierney (2008) as governance and is the informal and formal process of making academic decisions (p. 139). The decision-making, governance, process includes who is in charge, who makes decisions, who has a voice and how loud that voice is. Decision-making, governance, matters and makes a difference in that it influences teaching, learning and organizational culture. This concept is important as it is the primary focus of this research study. For the remainder of this paper, decision-making and governance will be used interchangeably as described by Tierney (2008).*
8. *Vulnerable students. This paper defines vulnerable student populations as those populations who are least likely to attend college based upon socioeconomic, race, culture or gender statuses. It is unclear if this will include all or part of the Oregon Promise student population.*
9. *Free College. In this study, free college specifically refers to programs where the government (federal, state or local) has agreed to pay for college above and beyond what would be covered by Pell and other grants. Free college programs are typically not based upon merit or have very loose merit qualifications and are designed to provide free college for vulnerable students. It should be noted that often these programs also cover college for students who do not fall into the “most vulnerable” socioeconomic statuses but it may not do so at 100% funding.*
10. *Student Support. Referring to primarily disadvantaged students, student supports consist of those efforts made to assist students through college (retention) to completion of their degree or certificate. These supports may take a wide variety*

of forms including food pantries, childcare, first-year experiences, altered andragogy, formal programs (e.g. Upward Bound, TRiO), financial supports, pre-college academic rigor, tutoring, mentoring and more. The degree to which student supports are provided, utilized and effective depends upon the institutional culture.

Limitations and Delimitations

Qualitative methodology results in certain limitations. For example, this study is limited to reality as expressed and constructed by the participants. It is also limited by my ability as a researcher to make sound methodological decisions. This study is limited by my ability to create guiding questions, develop rapport and facilitate a level of participation and engagement that is meaningful and informative. The results are limited by my ability to analyze and make sound methodological conclusions. Steps are taken to ensure that each of these processes occur including; expert panel review of guiding questions, theoretical application (prior to data gathering), member checking results with participants to encourage shared meaning, use of a field journal, use of field notes and a pilot site for practice and refining procedures.

Case study methodology itself is limited to description and lessons learned from the cases defining characteristics (boundaries). It is not useful for generation of new theory or understanding the essence of a phenomena. This study is also delimited to the Oregon community colleges and policies that are studied, specific leadership interviewed

and by the macro and micro contexts that inform this research. This research is grounded in theoretical guidelines, but these too provide delimitations.

Assumptions

This study makes several assumptions. First, it was assumed that Oregon community colleges desire to support students through completion and put forth good efforts at implementing best practices to support Oregon Promise students. Second, several assumptions were made regarding the decision-making (governance) premise. It was assumed that decision-making (governance) in higher education at the community college level requires more than one person, though a primary decision maker may “own” a body of decisions. It was assumed that the leadership interviewed have the experience and skill to make the best decisions possible under the given conditions and that they would share this experience openly and honestly. It was also assumed that leadership could articulate their decision-making process in ways that could be described and that constructed the reality at the institution. Finally, by utilizing vice presidents there may be a greater tendency towards a bureaucratic lens as opposed to a shared governance lens as might arise in open forums across campus. However, examining the leadership is important for examining the cultural aspects of institutions and for understanding the implementation of solutions (Tierney, 2008). In a higher educational system, leadership often owns the decisions though it does not always follow that these decisions result in cultural change or practice. Grassroots efforts and other groups can and do initiate

change. However, this change is then articulated and systematized into practice via written policy and procedure (a management role).

The case study methodology also makes several assumptions. First, it is assumed that the case study will examine a process, define meaning, utilize the researcher as an instrument, include fieldwork and produce descriptive results (Merriam, 1988). Case study research also assumes that concepts, hypothesis and theories can be built or tested from the abstract (Merriam, 1988). Finally, this present research assumes that the institutions selected have commonalities that may exist across other institutions and that when articulated would inform the greater body of literature on this topic.

Significance of Study

Government support for the need of a college educated populace is growing, as is accountability. Government funding is not keeping pace. In 1999 Oregon community colleges received approximately \$3,166 per student. In the subsequent twenty years (2019) this has increased by \$132 to just \$3,298 per student with increased mandates, reporting, outcomes, accreditation requirements, legal expectations (i.e. Title IX, mandated reporting, EEOC) and increased training demands (HECC, 2017). Colleges are being scrutinized at unprecedented levels. In response to government and societal scrutiny, free college initiatives continue to grow. However, along with access comes the need to support the success of students, particularly students from lower socio-economic statuses who may start college at a disadvantage. Historically colleges, including Oregon community colleges, have not done this well. New policy mandates such as the Oregon

Promise policy, are demanding that community colleges do better. Oregon community colleges in response to such mandates must make hard decisions about how, when, where and which students to support. This present study is designed to add to the general knowledge about how selected schools make these tough decisions in times of scarce resources. This information can inform the general body of knowledge and provide valuable information for other colleges, states and cities as Promise Programs continue to increase. By examining institutional decision-making, we learn and construct valuable information that informs theory, explains processes and ultimately informs our understanding of how institutions seek to support student success.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of the present study is to explain, define and construct how institutions and leadership make decisions in response to external policies and internal culture. While decision-making in response to external pressure has been examined, it has not been examined in response to initiatives that combine access, student support, internal influences and implementation of policy with limited resources. Promise initiatives that combine access, student support and free college are growing at numbers not previously seen. For this reason, it is important to articulate, examine, understand and explain how colleges, specifically community colleges which themselves are understudied, make decisions in response to internal and external forces. The next chapter reviews the literature on access and free college, decision-making in response to policy and research methods used in related studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

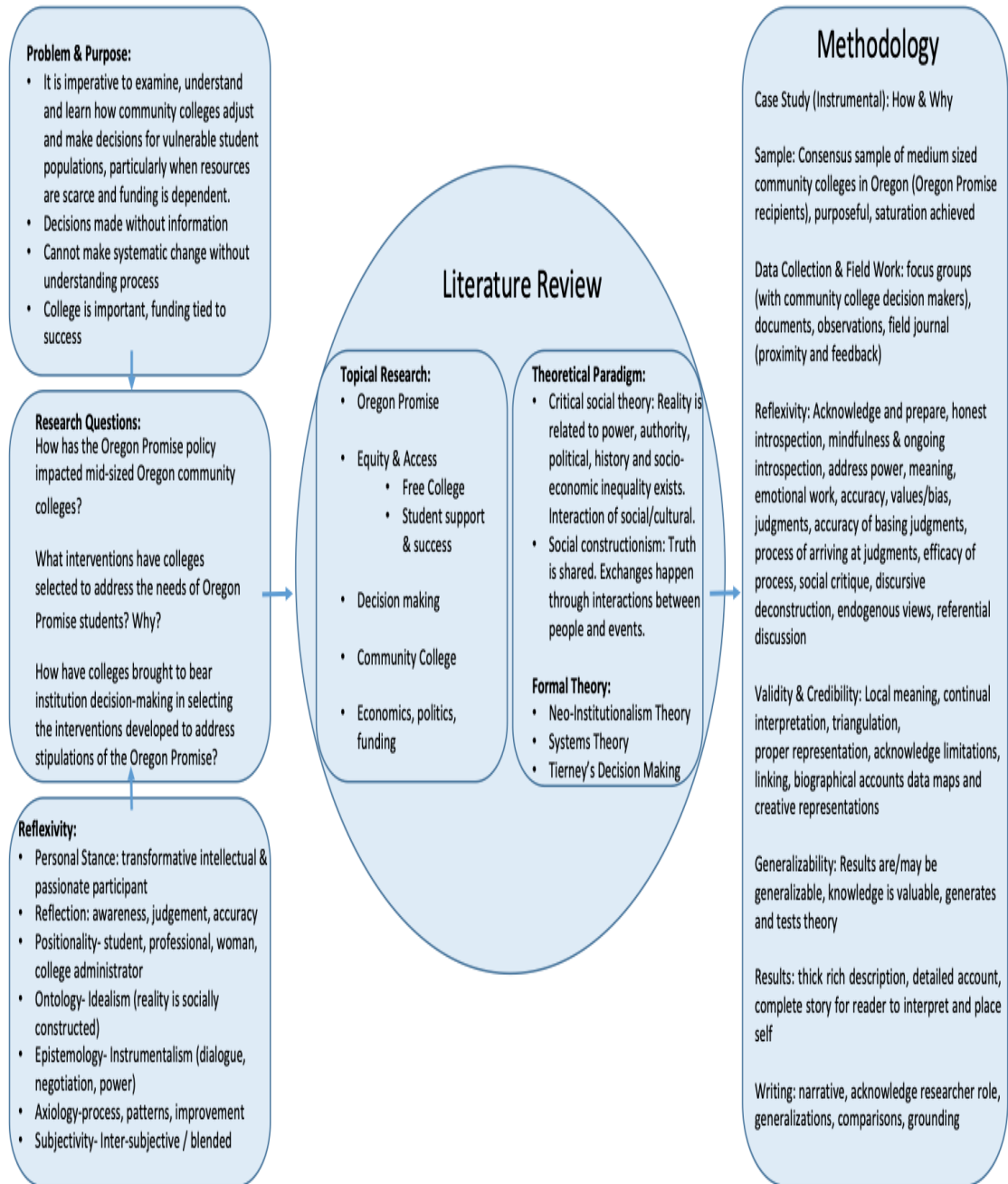
Introduction

In response to free college initiatives and the increased accountability that accompanies government funding, colleges need to do a better job of supporting students through completion of their college degree. To accomplish this, they need to understand how such decisions are made. This research study examines how mid-sized Oregon community colleges make decisions designed to support student completion in response to the Oregon Promise free college policy and accompanying mandates.

The purpose of this review of the literature is to better understand free college programs, institutional decision-making as it relates to student success and institutional response to increasing mandates in the face of scarce resources. The literature review is also designed to locate the present study within empirical and academic research (see figure 2 below). There are existing gaps in the literature, in that decision-making has not been examined in response to initiatives that combine access, student support through college completion (retention) and free college with limited resources. Further, there is limited existing research on current free college (Promise) movements and how they impact community college governance and higher educational culture in general. While there is a great deal of research on student success, interventions and teaching, the use of this information as applied to decision-making is relatively unstudied. This study seeks to

rectify this oversight with the purpose of explaining, understanding, interpreting and constructing general knowledge about decision making.

Figure 2. Literature Review Process



Criteria for Selection of Literature

Randolph (2009) suggests selecting the literature for review by focus, goal, perspective, coverage, organization and audience. The literature review should also identify central issues with a critical analysis and eye towards integration. Although my own voice is present, the criteria is pivotal research that exemplifies the main constructs. Constructs are organized by historical information, conceptual information and then by theoretical analysis. This literature is appropriate for general academic scholars and those with an advanced interest in education, college access, student support (retention and completion) and how decision-making impacts change.

This literature search started with a search of the Montana State University Library which includes millions of resources including Scholarworks and thirteen libraries across the state of Montana. The databases searched included ERIC, PsycInfo, JSTOR, ProQuest, Academic Search Complete, and Lexis Nexus. Initial search terms included education and history, free college, tuition free college, Tennessee Promise, Oregon Promise, decision-making, college decision-making, community college decision-making, institutional decision-making, community college institutional decision-making (and student support), decision-making and retention, Neo-Institutional theory, systems theory, governance and case study methodology. Additional weight was given to scholarly peer reviewed articles written and published in the United States between 2000 and 2017. The initial searches resulted in over 2,000 articles. These were read and helpful for learning more about the foundational issues and rhetoric used. Eventually, 199 articles collected from these searches were examined for central and pivotal information.

Findings from these 199 articles led to a second, third and subsequent wave of searches using Google Scholar and journal subscriptions (e.g. Inside Higher Education, Deep Dives in Education, Community College Research Center). In total, several hundred additional articles were located, read and considered. In addition to all previous criteria, critical works were selected by frequency of citation and relevance to this topic.

Additionally, five texts were used as a source of additional references and research of interest. These texts included; *How College Affects Students: 21st Century Evidence that Higher Education Works* by Mayhew, Rockenbach, Bowman, Seifert, Wolniak, Pascarella, and Terenzini (2016), *A History of American Education* by George Thelin (2011), *The Impact of Culture on Organizational Decision-making: Theory and Practice in Higher Education* by William Tierney (2008), *Organizational Theory in Higher Education: Core Concepts in Higher Education* by K. Manning (2013), and *How Colleges Change: Understanding, Leading and Enacting Change* by Adrianna Kezar (2014). The reference pages of all critical works, books and instrumental articles were examined and relevant articles were also gathered using this “snowball” methodology. Preference was again given to relevant, timely and seminal work. Approaching the search as a comprehensive problem solving exercise provided both structure and boundaries. The following literature review discusses important and relevant findings.

Historical Development of Federal Involvement in Higher Education

The Oregon Promise is essentially a government mandate to provide more support services to students without additional resources to do so. A historical review shows that

this is not a new or unique practice. The government has a strong history of placing pressures on institutions of higher learning to further economic, political or social agendas. The Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862 and the second Morrill Act in 1890, two such examples, demonstrated federal interest in the access and creation of institutions of higher education (Goodchild, 1997; Thelin, 2011). Viewed as an innovative collaboration, the Morrill Acts established a partnership between the federal government, state government and educational institutions (Thelin, 2011). Essentially, the Morrill Acts provided an incentive program based upon size which encouraged states to sell Western lands to the federal government and use the proceeds of the land sales to fund institutions of higher learning and advanced education (Thelin, 2011). Eventually, 17.5 million acres were sold to fund 51 institutions of higher learning (Goodchild, 1997). The new institutions meant that many more students could attend higher education than ever before. The land-grants were important because they demonstrated the interest and commitment by state government, federal government and private entities in higher education (Thelin, 2011). While this may have been one of the first opportunities the federal government took to shape the direction of higher education, it would not be the last.

The United States government once again took an active role in shaping American higher education with the implementation of the Serviceman Readjustment Act (GI Bill). Congress drafted the GI Bill in response to the concern that returning war veterans and the subsequent drop in manufacturing war materials, would lead to a recession or depression. Several components of the GI Bill made it unique. First, it was an entitlement

program which meant that benefits were guaranteed if the veteran met the requirements of service. Second, benefits were portable which meant that veterans could use the benefits at any school. Third colleges began considering advanced placement based upon experience to accelerate completion. Fourth, colleges were required to be federally accredited and required to meet certain standards which was the first time the federal government stepped in to make a statement about the quality of higher education (Thelin, 2011). Fifth, the GI Bill did not discriminate against minority populations and veterans of all color and ethnicity were eligible for benefits although the quality of the education provided was not always equal (Cervantes, Creusere, et al., 2005). Lastly, the GI Bill brought recognition to affordable mass education funded by the federal government.

The GI Bill brought millions of GI's to institutions of higher learning. However, the institutions were not often prepared to deal with the varying levels of educational attainment or the diverse war experiences of veteran students. The institutions were also not prepared to deal with the inherent individual diversity of veteran students. In numbers not seen before, institutions had to simultaneously manage differing academic abilities, differing emotional and physical student diversity, racial and ethnic diversity, gender diversity and issues of capacity (Thelin, 2011). While many changes were implemented, issues of how to handle diversity (e.g. academic, physical, emotional, ethnic, racial, gender, capacity) are still being grappled with today with varying levels of success. Educational institutions have yet to fully manage the diverse emotional, behavioral, and academic needs of diverse student populations and the expectations that accompany

government funding and public accountability (the idea that schools should be accountable for their ability to produce graduates who contribute to society).

Following the GI Bill, the United States government became involved in education once again with the Civil Rights Act and Title VI. Several key events laid the groundwork for the Civil Rights Act including The Truman Commission Report (1946), *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954), the first mention of affirmative action by John F. Kennedy (1961) and *Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education* (1961) which recognized that all students have due process and constitutional rights in the higher educational environment (Thelin, 2011). The Civil Rights Act is still relevant and aided important groundwork for the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 which granted special privileges to people of differing abilities to complete college work. Essentially from the beginning, admission policies of institutions of higher education were designed to be discriminatory to ethnic and racial minorities as well as those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Jewish, American Indian and black students were marginalized and underrepresented in higher education from the start (Thelin, 2011). Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 declared that no institution that discriminated based on color or national origin could receive federal dollars. This major policy change and the available funding via the GI Bill demonstrated a commitment on behalf of the federal government to protecting all students and offering education to the masses regardless of ethnicity, race or color (Department of Justice, 1999). Implementing this policy was far easier said than done. Discriminatory admissions policies and selective enrollments allowed institutions to follow the letter of the law but not the spirit. It took

great cooperation by internal and external factors including students, politicians, educators, alumni and others to bring about cultural change which varied by location and institution.

One such change factor was the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 which, with the follow-up legislation in 1972, authorized over 800 million dollars for a variety of programs to aid both students and colleges (Civic Impulse, 2016). The HEA was written and championed by politicians who believed that education was the “great equalizer”. The premise behind the HEA was that every American should be able to attend college with equal opportunity regardless of ability to pay or socioeconomic status. The basic legislation provided portable need based scholarships (e.g. Equal Opportunity/Pell Grants), federally insured loans, college equipment, library materials and expansion, technology, higher education construction and expansion as well as work study programs (Cervantes, Creusere, et. al., 2005).

The Higher Education Act opened the doors of higher education to large numbers of disadvantaged students especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. It came about at a time when higher education was dealing with a troubled image that included out of control students, weak curriculum, poor quality teachers, underprepared students from k-12 and other challenging issues (Thelin, 2011). It correctly appeared to policy makers as though only elite, wealthy, white, male students could access quality higher education and, thus, the HEA was written to address this discrepancy. In many ways, the HEA did open the door for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to

access higher education. However, the quality of that education was still not often the same quality afforded to wealthy white students.

With the HEA, the federal government established itself as a major financial and policy player in higher education. Because of the HEA, higher education continued to expand and more socio-economically disadvantaged students entered some sort of higher educational institution than ever before, instigating a renewed climate of hope within higher education (Thelin, 2011). This also required changes to the organization, structure, culture and function of the institutions. Institutions began considering and implementing open enrollment policies for all students. Community college structures developed for those who did not score high enough to enter four-year state or elite private institutions straight out of high school (Thelin, 2011). While previous policies allowed more disadvantaged students a higher education experience than in the past, also a major function of the HEA, there was still admittedly a hidden curriculum that disadvantaged vulnerable students (Banks, 2006; Macionis, 2015). For example, vulnerable students were more likely to be funneled to shorter term trade programs than to transfer degrees and more prestigious careers. The HEA allowed for more structural and organizational supports such as TRiO and Upward Bound to address and conquer the hidden curriculum with varying levels of success (Thelin, 2011). Under the HEA there has been increased diversity in both the student body and type of institution, but the struggles to support all students within the institutions still exist.

Once again with Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972, the federal government established its' interest in higher education and utilized its financial

resources to protect populations of vulnerable students. All schools that receive federal monies are required to comply with Title IX legislation. Organizationally, this means having a Title IX trained coordinator, having an effective investigative process, a fair and equitable reporting structure, a consistent and effective way to inform all students, staff and faculty of the Title IX requirements and an organizational commitment to equity. Structurally, institutions have had to build female locker rooms, mothering rooms and address the needs of bathrooms for a variety of gender identities (Title IX, nd). Implementation of Title IX has been an important, costly, and daunting under-funded mandate.

The federal government has a long history of practices that demonstrate an interest in higher education, access and protections for students. However, the government has not always devoted enough resources to accomplish these goals. The federal government did not authorize additional dollars to support the implementation of Title IX, but instead tied existing funding to compliance which has done little to bridge the feeling that Title IX places yet another non-academic burden on schools and creates a climate of resistance and apathy. Pepperdine, a small private college, went so far as seceding from federal funding to resist the cultural change implications rather than comply with Title IX, but it quickly reversed its position under funding pressures (EAB, 2016). Under Title IX schools were asked to take on new robust human resource roles as keepers of social justice concerns without additional dollars, perhaps one of the first major unfunded mandates imposed upon higher education. Historically, institutions have been forced to change their structures and organizations in response to governmental

policies with varying levels of support. The ability to address governmental requirements and public accountability with limited dollars remains a pressing concern. When this is coupled with public accountability and the desire to do right by vulnerable student's, colleges struggle with what and how to make change.

Historical Context of Community College

In the 1900's community colleges were extensions of secondary systems that provided lower division college credit for the unprepared or immature (Fairchilds, 2001; Vaughn, n.d.). In this tradition William Harper, the spiritual father of community college, established a junior college inside the walls of the University of Chicago and pushed for an additional two years of college tied to high school (Vaughn, n.d.). In 1907, California became the first state to offer two years of post-high-school education and essentially legitimized the local junior college through legislative power. The movement continued throughout 1917-1921 as junior colleges developed their own identity and governing boards. In 1920, the American Association of Junior Colleges was established and marked the first national recognition of junior colleges as an institution of higher education. In 1947, the President's Commission on Higher Education for American Democracy also known as the Truman Commission, formally recognized the community college as legitimate American institution of higher education and learning. These initial institutions were tuition free, served as community centers and were locally controlled. In 1960, there was a community college boom with assistance from the Kellogg Foundation funding of the Junior College Leadership program and 50 new schools emerged in 1965 alone. The boom of institutional growth saw the expansion of statewide systems and

increased state support. Along with that support came increased governance and legislation. In 1977 alone, 587 pieces of legislation impacting community colleges were enacted. With the growth and additional support and direction, the community college was firmly established as an open access and affordable option for students (Vaugh, n.d.). The community college system continued to evolve as did its mission and purpose. Throughout the years, community colleges served increased numbers of adult students. They became institutions for lifelong learning with strong links to business and industry. While they remained open access, they became economic forces for the communities they served (Fairchild, 2001). They also continued to serve students that were not viewed as university ready.

In the late 1970s and into the 1990s, community colleges experienced what amounted to the first taste of criticism about performance outcomes (e.g. graduation, retention, persistence rates). First, Astin (1977) recognized that transfer students were less likely to complete their four-year degree. Next, Clark (1980) suggested that the open access environment of community college did not equal similar opportunities for attainment as community college students were more likely to attend part-time, stop out in response to life stressors and house students who were academically underprepared. In comparison to four-year colleges, community college students were more likely to consist of minority students, have students with real-world obligations and consist of students from lower socio-economic statuses and first generation college goers (Clark, 1980; Dougherty, 1994). The harshest critiques suggested that community colleges maintained

inequality by stifling ambition and steering low income students towards low-status positions (Clark, 1980; Dougherty, 1994; Knight, 2009).

By 2010, community colleges began to outperform liberal arts colleges in academic learning outcomes when controlling for students' incoming academic preparation or pre-college tested ability (Mayhew et al., 2016). Liu and Roohr (2013) suggested that community colleges may have demonstrated even greater performance in positive learning outcomes in comparison to four year liberal arts colleges if precollege academic ability had been controlled for. The community college as a cultural institution also appeared to positively correlate with self-reports of learning though at a less than significant degree (Mayhew, et.al., 2016). With 40% of all new undergraduate students starting at community college, the government demanded that community colleges match access with completion (Radford, Berkner, Wheelless and Shepherd, 2010). Three-year graduation rates have slowly increased over time, but most community colleges only graduate around 30-50% according to 2004-2006 data (Radford et.al., 2010).

As institutions sought to do better and budget shortfalls became more common place, community colleges were forced to charge tuition that in many cases has been unsustainable for vulnerable students who rely on Pell grants to cover college costs (Boggs, 2004; Callan, 2012). The challenges have continued with increased demand, limited facilities, high adjunct faculty turn-over, increasing numbers of remedial students and an ever-widening variety of students (e.g. first time, age variety, level of maturity, varying socio-economic statuses and varying purposes for attending college). However even as tuition skyrocketed and unprecedented challenges increased, Americans realized

the value of community college particularly for those students for whom it was community college or no college (Boggs, 2004; Callan, 2012; Driscoll and Clapp, 2016). In 2000, 31% of the American public felt college was necessary. This number increased to 55% in 2010 and as high as 60% in 2016 (Callan, 2012; Carter, 2016). Today there are around 1200 regionally accredited institutions, uniquely American community colleges that serve more than 11.5 million students per year (Radford et al., 2010).

While most Americans still believe that college is the best method for people to get ahead and succeed, 69% believe that there are many people qualified to attend college who do not have the means to do so (Carter, 2016). Especially for this population, community college levels the playing field with open access, comprehensive missions, and commitment to the values of democracy, justice and social change (Aragon and Brantmeier, 2009). College attendance is beneficial and increases living wages (Mayhew et. al., 2016). Even students who attend but do not complete a degree earn 9-13% more than the average high school graduate with similar high school grades and test scores (Sullivan, 2010). Each year of credit at a community college is associated with a 5–8% increase in annual earnings (the same value as a year’s worth of credit at a four-year college). A community college graduate with an Associate’s Degree is likely to earn an additional \$9,000 per year or \$325,000 over the course of a lifetime (Sullivan, 2010). In addition to money, college attendance has a host of other benefits including increased job satisfaction, increased self-esteem, improved health and more (Mayhew et.al., 2016; Sullivan, 2010). This work is grounded solidly in human capital, status attainment and career development theories with over 100 theoretically based articles cited a plethora of

times (Mayhew et.al., 2016). The community college experience is valuable. The challenge remains ensuring that vulnerable students can attend and complete.

Historical Discussion of Constructs

Access

Community colleges have historically served vulnerable and disadvantaged students. This remains true today. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2015), community colleges serve 44% of all U.S. undergraduates, 40% of all first-time freshmen, 43% of all Black undergraduate students, 52% of all LatinX students, 45% of Asian and Pacific Islander students and 52% of all American Indian students. Students who attend community colleges are also more likely to be from lower socio-economic statuses or from first generation college going families (Page and Scott-Clayton, 2016). This is particularly powerful as these are populations of students who may not otherwise attend college at all. Only 9% of people from the poorest families earn a Bachelor's Degree, while 74% of people from high socio-economic statuses do (Page and Scott-Clayton, 2016). Page and Scott-Clayton (2016) report that the average annual cost of college may be a barrier to college completion. The annual average cost of community college is \$5,960 which increases to \$12,839 at a public four-year institution and to \$23,550 at private four year institutions. Since 1978, the price of college has risen three times faster than the inflation rate. When adjusting for inflation and expressing the cost in terms of constant dollars including average financial aid awards, the average tuition and fees have remained effectively unchanged at community colleges (Wolla,

2014). In fact, Wolla (2014) continues, tuition and fees have decreased by \$1,140 over the past ten years.

Does cost really matter? Research suggests that college students and particularly community college students, are especially sensitive to tuition changes. As tuition goes up attendance goes down and higher tuition equates to lower participation (Dynarski 2000, 2004, 2008; Page and Scott-Clayton, 2016). Dynarski (2000) suggests that for every \$1,000 community college tuition decreases, attendance increases by 3-4% (Page and Scott-Clayton, 2016). This is evidence to support that increasing costs can then be a barrier to college attendance for community college students. Even more concerning is that tuition hikes impact diversity. Controlling for factors such as diversity of high school students, financial aid, unemployment rates, number of institutions available in the local area and tuition levels Wolniak and Allen (2018) found that for every \$1,000 increase, racial and ethnic diversity decreased by 4.5% for full time freshman students at non-selective public institutions. In contrast, for every 1% increase in tuition and fees at private selective institutions diversity increased at local public institutions supporting the idea that education is an eco-system (Wolniak and Allen, 2018).

From the start, vulnerable students face many barriers to college of which cost is just one. First, these students are more likely to come from poorer performing school districts arriving at college less prepared. Second, when students do not believe they can attend college they do not try as hard in high school, creating a self-perpetuating cycle where they have limited access to institutions of higher learning. Clark (1960) states that, “A major problem of democratic society is inconsistency between encouragement to

achieve and the realities of limited opportunity (p.569).” Vulnerable students may have poor entrance scores, place into developmental education, or be funneled towards less prestigious easier career paths.

“The conflict between open-door admission and performance of high quality often means a wide discrepancy between the hopes of entering students and the means of their realization. Students who pursue ends for which a college education is required but who have little academic ability gain admission into colleges only to encounter standards of performance they cannot meet. As a result, while some students of low promise are successful, for large numbers failure is inevitable and structured.” (Clark, 1960, p. 573).

Clark (1960), viewed community college as the place to sort students into transfer students, occupational students or latent terminal (students who wanted to be transfer students, but did not have the skills needed to succeed). Providing a minimal education to students destined to fail anyway, known as the “cooling out function”, is hidden while community college highlights the opportunities to explore career paths, serve as a transfer institution or obtain a career at a working wage (Clark, 1960). Realistically these functions result in additional time, additional credits and additional costs for vulnerable students. Clark maintained that community college served as a capitalist sorting institution; keeping the poor suppressed via gradual disengagement and nurturing the talent of those who are more likely to succeed. More recent research has indicated that “cooling out” is not inevitable. Factors such as high campus diversity, stigma free remediation, quality advising and a culture of student success (completion) and holistic support for all students have been shown to overcome discriminatory “cooling out” practices (Bahr, 2007). The key then is to ensure college is indeed valuable to all students and ensure that vulnerable students get to institutions that foster success and institutional

(cultural) fit (Mayhew et.al., 2016; Cabrera and La Nasa, 1991). Understanding how to create cultures that impact student success (retention and completion) is especially key for community colleges as they are often subject to even stronger external pressures than four year institutions (Seymour, 2016).

Students

Students from low or extremely low socio-economic statuses often live for the moment (to survive), seeing college as a benefit that occurs in the future. Human capital theory maintains that unless the benefits outweigh the disadvantages, college attendance does not happen. Perhaps the largest barrier for vulnerable students is the lack of information about resources including financial aid (Pluhta and Penny, 2013; Sullivan, 2010). When students do have information about the systems themselves, they find them hard to navigate or elect not to take on additional debt (Pluhta and Penny, 2013; Sullivan, 2010). Students who do not yet possess the capital to understand the value of college retention and completion may find themselves even more vulnerable to giving up completely. While some merit scholarships exist for students from low socioeconomic statuses these are often geared at the brightest or hardest working and not at the human potential each student possesses. Data further suggests that these scholarships are not extremely effective at closing the gap and addressing barriers as they garner few applications or qualified applicants (Pallais, 2009). There are however some interventions that have demonstrated some success.

Retention

There is a wide breadth of literature on student retention, particularly retention in the community college setting. However, it should be noted that, "...retention is not the goal, but it is the "byproduct" or result of improved educational quality and the upgrading of the student experience. (Noel-Levitz, 2007, p.2)." Colleges, particularly community colleges with open door policies have the obligation and responsibility to provide quality and impactful education to all students that enter their doors (Fike and Fike, 2008; Noel-Levitz, 2007; Scrivener, et.al., 2015; Tinto, 1985). Many community colleges such as CUNY (City University of New York), have done this successfully. CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) took extremely vulnerable students and nearly doubled graduation rates by (a) requiring full time enrollment, (b) starting students quickly in developmental courses, (c) decreasing student per advisor ratios, (d) requiring both career and tutoring services, (e) linking courses (and blocked scheduling), (f) requiring an ASAP seminar course and (g) creating student cohorts (Scrivener, et.al., 2015). This program in turn provided free tuition, free books and free transportation via public mass transit. They demonstrated measurable results through institutionalized systemic culture change. While positive, these changes were not inexpensive and part-time students were excluded from school altogether.

In Tennessee, completion rates have increased with the following interventions (a) five year program review, (b) required FASFA application and education, (c) focus on completion, (d) focus on community impact (service learning and volunteerism as part of the curriculum), (e) creating pathways from high school, to community college, to four-

year universities, (f) awarding stackable credentials, (g) providing appropriate technologies and (h) engaging adult learners with credit for prior learning and credit for employment (Sutton, 2015). Other studies have found that curriculum, availability of courses and number of credits are important. Fike and Fike (2008) note that student developmental levels are particularly important. Students need to quickly and efficiently gain the needed level of college readiness to succeed. This means starting with assessment and placement and then moving students quickly through developmental math and writing (Fike and Fike, 2008). Fike and Fike (2008) also found, like CUNY, that full time enrollment was critical to student success. They found this to be true even when students took classes online. This finding is especially difficult to grapple with as community colleges are committed to serving all students and all students are not able to attend full time.

Noel-Levitz (2007) identified twenty practices that were essential for student success and retention. First, was an emphasis on students and teaching. Next, were interventions such as academic support programs, honors programs, first-year programs and programs specifically for at-risk students. Interventions for institutions included meaningful learning outcomes (and measurement), early warning systems, systematic and regular evaluations of student life, and solid methods of communication for staff, faculty and students. Clear plans, goals, strong collaborations (cultures of collaboration), and faculty engagement were all highly correlated with student success (Ben-Avie, et al., 2012; Noel-Levitz, 2007).

Carrell and Sacerdote (2016) suggest that mentoring and coaching are effective strategies for vulnerable student populations. Other researchers have found that the first-year experience is crucial for student success (Barefoot, 2000). Typically, the first-year experience includes such measures as increasing student interaction, in depth orientation, increasing student-faculty interaction (both inside and outside of class), increasing student involvement, linking curriculum to real life, helping students acclimate to advanced demands and balancing remedial or preparatory work (Barefoot, 2000). One of the primary facets of the first-year experience is connecting students with peers through special programs and learning communities designed to increase student interaction and common experience (Barefoot, 2000). According to Astin (1993) the student's peer group is the single most important influence on growth and development during the first four years of college. Again, this may prove a challenge for community colleges as many house commuter students, working students and non-traditional students who already have established peer groups.

There is also a plethora of research on quality teaching strategies that impact student engagement. Gonzales (2013) and Gelder (2005) focused on teaching critical thinking. Others have focused on rapport and teacher styles in the classroom (Grasha, 1994). Clearly the choices of interventions and breadth of interventions are present in the literature. Unique and creative projects abound, many demonstrating positive student retention and completion at community college. Most recently, the Community College Research Center has suggested that Guided Pathways to success may be the answer (Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins, 2015). Guided Pathways builds on the work of Achieving

the Dream and the Bill and Melinda Gates Developmental Education Redesign project and focuses on multiple measure placement, co-requisite courses for developmental education, mapping clear pathways and student outcomes, mandatory advising, student success courses, mandatory orientation, leveraging technology, and effective teaching (Bailey, Jaggars and Jenkins, 2015). It is worth noting that how to bring successful pilot projects to scale is an area that remains under-studied. The primary missing piece appears to be what strategies school should employ, how, when, and with whom, to facilitate a culture and system of student retention and success. How do schools make these important decisions?

Tierney's Decision-making Models

Before exploring decision-making in detail, it is necessary to understand what it is, how it has historically been done and the state of the research that exists. Colleges make important decisions about programming, policies and resource allocation to name a few. However, research on the decision-making processes at community colleges remains under-researched. Unsurprisingly, there has been little research on how decision-making (governance) occurs at college, and the research that is available takes place at universities and not community colleges. Multiple theories have been proposed to explain governance and decision-making, but these are largely untested. In fact, it can be argued that existing research to support any of these positions is limited at best.

According to Tierney (2008) all decision-making stems directly from socially constructed governance. Governance is the mechanism for decision-making and both are designed to move the organization towards learning. Governance stems directly from the

organizational climate, the culture, of the institution of higher education. It is embedded in the web of interactions co-created between multiple voices, internal and external forces and attention paid to those forces by the college culture and administration (Tierney, 2008). This is also demonstrated from the Association of America Association of University Professors (AAUP) perspective, “The ideal governance model is one in which collaboration among the various governance components is the rule.” (Ramo, 1998, p.6). More recently, Seymour (2016) and Kezar (2016) have stated that it is about relationships and it takes a team from both the top-down and bottom-up to institute change.

Historical Models. As far back as the 12th and 13th century, the University of Bologna was comprised of students with faculty as servants. In other areas, such as Paris, the opposite was true and faculty ran institutions of higher learning. In the Middle Ages, the church ran educational institutions and carefully controlled curriculum and teaching content. Eventually the church granted the emperor or king decision-making powers. In moving towards more modern times, the colonies fashioned American colleges in the English and German traditions. Unlike their English and German peers, America has extended more power to the state and granted faculty less formal governance roles than in these countries where faculty are civil servants and agents of the government. Education in America is a Tenth Amendment power—a power not enumerated in the Constitution that is thereby delegated to the states to oversee. That said, the federal government can and has influenced education through access and multiple means of funding (e.g. Pell grants, Stafford loans, research grants and other mechanisms of institutional support). The culture of institutions has also changed in response to external factors and funding

mechanisms. Over time, priests and clergy have been less represented on public boards with wealthy philanthropists, business owners, judges and politicians growing in influence (Tierney, 2008). This has resulted in more pressure towards a traditional for-profit business culture that is in direct conflict with the distributed power structure found in current (public) institutions of higher learning.

Shared governance can be traced back to 1960 when it was defined as, "... governance in higher education as the authority to create rules and regulations concerning the governing of the academy and the relationships among various constituencies within the organization." (Tierney, 2008). Specifically, this has been experienced as faculty control, democratic participation and strategic policy making (Dill and Helm, 1988). While influences from all three can still be seen, it is likely that strategic policy making is attempting to exert more influence as external entities tie compliance to funding. Specifically, how strategic policy making can be seen takes on one of four distinct forms: bureaucratic, collegial, political and cybernetic (Tierney, 2008).

Bureaucratic model of governance. The bureaucratic model of governance harkens back to the ideas of Max Weber and assumes planning occurs separate from the work, separate from the workers and via a hierarchical chain of command. Unlike traditional organizations, higher education organizations developed differently. In higher education, it was professional (disciplinary) bureaucracy that permeated with each area maintaining its own planning, regulation and reporting structure that differed from everyone else creating an environment of silos that functioned separately (Tierney, 2008). There are those that argue we should return to bureaucracy from a traditional standpoint.

This can be seen through compliance initiatives, performance based funding, increased demands from accreditation agencies for specific policies and procedures and legislative mandates to develop student support services. Though these are top down “demands”, the challenge is that they do not necessarily result in institutional changes or realized student success in terms of retention and completion (Seymour, 2016). Proponents maintain that if we centralized planning, work and chain of command then higher education would be more efficient with greater societal power and influence. Opponents argue that this gives more power to college Presidents and administration who cannot be trusted to manage learning and faculty (Tierney, 2008). Neo-Institutional theory maintains that external factors do exert influence on the institutional culture and these may be from the top down, however, that influence does not necessarily realize itself in institutional change. Instead, the external influences interact with the internal cultural norms to implement institutionalized change or lack thereof (Kezar, 2014). Further, policies only apply if the actors continue to support, adhere and propagate them (Meyer, 2008).

Collegial model of governance. Opponents of bureaucracy often fall into the collegial model of governance camp. The collegial model asserts that governance should revolve around respect and consensus. Proponents of the collegial model argue that decisions are then made through competence and legitimate authority. Opponents argue that there is little evidence that a collegium ever existed within higher education (Baldrige, 1971). Opponents also argue that consensus is difficult to achieve and as a result, institutions are forced to maintain the status quo without making progress (Tierney, 2008). While collegiate models of governance are popular in rhetoric, examples

of optimum functioning using these models are scarce. The advantage of the collegial model is that it is cooperative and collaborative, lending credence to the idea that reality is socially constructed. The collegial model is also supported by Neo-Institutional theory in that it helps explain how governance and power are distributed across the institution and reinforced by the actors, norms and culture. The collegial model could be an important factor in community college governance if the forces could be harnessed in such a way as to create mass movement, collective ambition and “lift” (Seymour, 2016).

Political model of governance. The political model of governance dates to the 1960-1970’s and has its roots in conflict and bargaining (Baldrige, 1971). It argues that multiple individuals and groups within an organization are involved in decision-making and that their interests, values and goals will inevitably conflict. The political lens is helpful in explaining how external influences interact, or clash, with internal demands (Kezar, 2014; Kezar, 2016). As internal forces conflict, political models suggest that negotiation occurs. Decisions are a by-product of political negotiation. Information is a tool used by those in competition for power and those who wield the tools may look for information that supports their position or undermines the positions of others (Dean and Sharfman, 1997). There is room for cooperation and alliances as those in power argue convincingly, build coalitions/momentum, bargain and make compromises and as a result force change on institutional culture and operation (Burge, 2008). Proponents of the political theory claim that, “... (1) organizations are comprised of people with partially conflicting preferences, (2) strategic decision-making is ultimately political in the sense that powerful people get what they want, and (3) people engage in political tactics...”

(Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992, p. 27). Opponents argue that political theories do not lend themselves to analyzing mundane operations and that even when in use are not inclusive, though this could explain why status-quo is often maintained in Neo-Institutional theory (Kezar, 2014; Meyer, 2008; Tierney, 2008). Political models can also explain how reality is socially constructed from a critical social point of view as those in power and without power, construct reality in response to real and perceived decision-making. At the very least, the tension provided between parties or concepts such as status quo versus improvement, create opportunities for change (Seymour, 2016).

Cybernetic model of governance. The cybernetic model of governance championed by Birnbaum (1989) includes aspects of bureaucracy, collegial and political models. Essentially, “The cybernetic paradigm posits that organization control systems can be described in terms of sensing mechanisms and negative feedback loops that collectively monitor changes from acceptable levels of functioning and that activate forces that return the institution to their previously stable state.” (Birnbaum, 1989, p. 239). Proponents maintain three axioms about the cybernetic model: (1) it works well for colleges operating at a level of stability and success, (2) it provides a structure for considering decision making, and (3) it is useful for adaptation and flexibility. Opponents argue that it has not been well studied and it does not address students, faculty systems, or system disruptions (Tierney, 2008).

While the governance models above may be the most common models of decision-making, other models do exist. The most relevant here is the contingency model by Tarter and Hoy (1998). Tarter and Hoy (1998) maintain that different decision-making

models are useful under different situations and contexts. For example, Chaffee (1983) researched decision-making and found that decision-making occurs at various levels (e.g. individual, collective, group and organizational). This would be helpful when identifying the current context and what level of decision-making is needed. Other findings suggest that decision-making includes variables such as capabilities of decision makers, communication of ideas and values held by those in decision-making power. This too can be useful in certain contextual situations (Tarter and Hoy, 1998).

Incremental Decision-making

Theories of incremental decision-making are mentioned here because they appear to be relevant when data is scarce and results are unknown (Tarter and Hoy, 1998). Incremental decision-making posits that the human brain does not have the processing capability to optimize choice from multiple alternatives. As such, decision makers typically consider a few options that are like the status quo simplifying the process. This is particularly useful for explaining why institutions modify current policy and practices instead of making decisions that could bring major change (Sellers, 2005; Tarter and Hoy, 1998). This may prove even more true when key decision makers lack the time and expertise needed to gather and analyze data on multiple alternatives during periods of resource scarcity. The implications of Promise policies are unknown while the accountability factor is high. This could lead institutions to approach the issue from a perspective of trial and error, to scale up current practices with the hopes they will work, or take guesses at what might be most useful engaging those who might be most useful (Adams and Seagren, 2004; Paolucci and Gambescia, 2007). This emergent philosophy is

in line with social constructionist theory which considers instinct, gut reactions and shared reality as mechanisms for decision-making. Incremental decision-making is also supported by the Neo-Institutional theory which states that decisions are absorbed by the system and new mandates and policies may generate new schemas that lead to collective support and institutionalized change (Meyer, 2008). This is even more likely to occur in colleges where actors own pieces that are necessary for systematic functioning (e.g. curricula, subject specific expertise, tenure, research interests, administrative titles). System actors and external influences (which become system actors) all act on cultural norms and institutional practices both in response to and despite decision-making mandates.

Community College Decision-making

Of the research that does exist on decision-making at the community college, results indicate that the collegial, political and cybernetic models tend to be the most popular methods though this depends largely upon the leadership and culture of the individual college (Tierney, 2008). Most community colleges work with various stakeholders (who become actors) including advisory boards, faculty groups, consultants, student groups and governing committees. This structure lends itself to the collegial model. However, many community colleges have strong faculty and staff bargaining units which tend to favor a political decision-making model. They also have executive leadership that would seem to support the bureaucratic model. Likely, the combination of multiple factors has led to the cybernetic model being the most prevalent in community college research. One way of examining the culture and values of an institution is to look

at what and how the mission values statements were developed (Tierney, 2008). This can often provide clues to the decision-making model and culture that exist. Seymour (2016) stresses that an institutions mission, vision and values (MVV) are the vehicle for collective ambition and emotional contagion to drive positive institutional change.

Promise Programs

Overview

As mentioned previously, research on Promise Programs is limited at best. According to Perna and Leigh (2018), there are currently 226 Promise-like Programs in 226 locations nationwide. In some cases, the Promise Programs are city or district specific. When applying state residency and financial disbursement filters, there are 71 programs nationwide. Applying need based filters resulted in a total of 26 programs. While many Promise and Promise-like Programs currently exist, there are only 14 empirical studies that meet rigorous academic standards (Swanson, Watson, Ritter and Nichols, 2016). All 14 empirical articles were reviewed and what follows are study results from Promise Programs that at least coincidentally address issues of access, persistence, retention and completion. Promise-like Programs were included to increase the breadth of material (Table 1).

21st Century Scholars Program. The 21st Century Scholars Program is one of the earliest versions of a Promise Program. This program, funded by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education offers income eligible 6th, 7th and 8th graders a two year and/or four-year college commitment. The program consists of a college pledge, pre-college support

services (e.g. advising, career exploration, financial aid workshops), generous financial support and then support on campus once admitted. According to Lumina (2008), the Scholars program showed remarkable increases in access; 85% of students who signed up for the Scholars Program were in college within one year of their high school graduation. Even more impressive, they reported being a scholar improved odds of graduating with high school honors by 37% and by 85% for African American students (Lumina, 2008). Subsequent research was not as positive. A rigorous longitudinal statistical analysis showed that students were only 2.6% more likely to attend college and this applied only to community college (Toutkoushian, Hossler, DesJardins, McCall, and Canche, 2015). This study utilized binomial and multinomial logistical regression not accounting, and then accounting, for self-selection. Dependent variables included initial enrollment decisions and subsequent enrollment. Explanatory variables included gender, race/ethnicity, age, college level of parents, family status, GPA, geographic location, socio-economic status and sign up as a Scholar. Multiple statistical analyses were conducted and multiple techniques were used to account for missing and incomplete datasets (Toutkoushain et.al., 2015).

El Dorado Promise. The El Dorado promise started in 2007 and was designed to provide students from El Dorado, Arkansas with significant first dollar scholarships to attend two or four year Arkansas institutions of higher education and pay for up to five years of education (Ash, 2015). It was modeled after the Kalamazoo Promise and like it, gains have been evidenced in economic development and secondary success. Unlike the Kalamazoo Promise, the El Dorado Promise was funded by private donor support

(Murphy's Oil). Following a quasi-experimental, longitudinal study with data matches, results indicate that high-school graduation rates in El Dorado have significantly improved. Even more interesting, is that employees of the school district attribute this success to high student expectations, increased college preparatory coursework and efforts to raise college awareness at a young age (Ash, 2015). This work was limited in that it does not yet include post-secondary outcomes. It does, however, provide evidence that education is a system and that both secondary and external partners via a connected eco-system can influence post-secondary access.

Georgia HOPE. The Georgia HOPE Scholarship though not technically a Promise Scholarship, is included here because it has important findings. Starting in 1993, the HOPE Scholarship serves about 36% of students in the university system and 8% of students in the community college system (Suggs, 2016). Low income students' make-up 43% of HOPE scholars and these students show significantly less diversity than comparable freshman populations. HOPE scholarships will not cover remedial classes and cap awards at 137 credits (Suggs, 2016). Overtime the Georgia HOPE scholarship has demonstrated that it attracts even less vulnerable students and that fewer students from low-socioeconomic statuses even apply. Fewer Black and LatinX students have applied for the HOPE scholarship and both HOPE acceptance and graduation rates for these populations have declined over time (Suggs, 2016). Reading the literature from the HOPE scholarship, though limited, does not suggest a culture of change has occurred within institutions as a result of system-wide scholarship access. Neither access, retention nor completion have improved under the Georgia HOPE scholarship.

Kalamazoo Promise. The Kalamazoo Promise, also one of the first of the “Promise” financial solutions, demonstrated some measurable success. In 2005, an anonymous donor announced that every student in Kalamazoo, Michigan would be given a scholarship that would provide free college for every high school graduate regardless of high school performance or ability to pay. In examining the Kalamazoo Promise, Andrews, DesJardins and Ranchhod (2009) undertook a quasi-experimental approach to look at just how the Kalamazoo Promise impacted vulnerable students. Specifically, they examined 430,702 students from 591 high schools during 1996-2006. This study’s strength was that it used the entire population as opposed to a sub-sample. It also utilized comparison data from the entire state to create matched samples. The researchers ran difference in difference (and differences within differences) statistical analyses. They further controlled for other variables (such as other scholarships awarded) through statistical methods and matched samples. The cross section and within section analysis found that the Kalamazoo Promise increased the number of students who elected to take the ACT and send their ACT exam results to colleges in increased numbers with a statistical significance that was positive at the .001 level. In some cases, the rates of students that took the ACT and sent their applications to colleges doubled. However, there were two additional findings that were equally as surprising. The first finding was that students attended college at higher rates that could also be statistically attributed to the Kalamazoo Promise. Second, researchers found that the Kalamazoo Promise had a direct impact on college readiness. In fact, the results indicated that the Kalamazoo Promise statistically influenced high school credit completion, reduced high school

suspensions, impacted high school graduation and had substantial impacts on college enrollment and completion (Andrews, DesJardins and Ranchhod, 2009; Page and Scott-Clayton, 2016). How the Kalamazoo Promise impacted access is more complicated. The students from the lowest socio-economic statuses were more likely to apply to community college while more affluent students selected smaller private schools or four year universities. It is unclear what prompted these choices and possible under-matching, though clearly economics played a role (Andrews, DesJardins and Ranchhod, 2009).

New Haven Promise. The New Haven Promise is a first dollar scholarship that started in 2010 and is paid for by a community foundation. Early results suggest mixed results. Regression discontinuity estimates demonstrate positive impacts on graduation rates and college enrollments. However, difference-in-difference estimates demonstrated null results (Gonzales et al., 2016). Additionally, there was little support found for the program's impact on persistence and completion. One noticeable flaw in this early study is that researchers had trouble identifying, thus following, New Haven Promise students. Without data to pull out on specific students it was difficult to identify institutional resources or specific student supports and any influence that these may have provided.

Oklahoma's Promise Program. The Oklahoma Promise is a hybrid program that pays in state tuition for students who demonstrate financial need (under \$50k for a family of four) and that meet both academic and behavioral benchmarks. The program requires a commitment from students in 8th-10th grade to take a pre-college curriculum focused on increased academic rigor, attendance and completion. Using a longitudinal multi-modal approach using fixed effects and logistical regressions (accounting for self-selection

bias), researchers found that the Oklahoma Promise was positively correlated with persistence but that this varied across college class (i.e. freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), race and financial aid packages (Mendoza and Mendez, 2012).

Pittsburgh Promise. The Pittsburgh Promise is unique in that it demonstrated an impact on college retention from year one to year two and student degree completion. In its first four years of funding, the Pittsburgh Promise funded 2,597 scholars from the graduating classes of 2008-2010. From 2008-2009, 76% of the scholars persisted versus 66% in the ACT national sample (Iriti, Bickel and Kaufman, 2012). Further, 61% of scholars completed a degree or credential, also significantly higher than the national data set. This mixed methods study used longitudinal data, statistical analyses and in-depth interviews. Like other Promise Programs, those with the highest economic need and males with low GPAs were more likely to drop out of the post-secondary programs. Additionally, those from the lowest socio-economic statuses attended community colleges at much higher rates than four year institutions (Iriti, Bickel and Kaufman, 2012). What appeared to work in this study was the purposeful development of a culture of support as evidenced by the branded slogan “Work Hard and Dream Big”. Actors engaged in branding to develop emotional contagion and “lift” the goals of this Promise Program. The Promise Program developed an eco-system of support including high student expectations, financial support, college preparedness coursework in secondary institutions, Higher Education support centers, non-profit support centers, community groups, assigned providers, businesses and local employers to surround Pittsburgh Promise scholars (Iriti, Bickel and Kaufman, 2012). Additionally, this program is being

slowly phased up and did not over-promise and under deliver. While gains are still modest for LatinX and African American males, they too are demonstrating positive trends (Iriti, Bickel and Kaufman, 2012). Important findings from this work indicate that no one strategy will solve the retention and completion problem. However, a clear shared institutional vision about what matters may create a culture of change that can be capitalized on and institutionalized.

Tennessee Achieve and Tennessee Promise. Like the Kalamazoo Promise, the Tennessee Achieve and Tennessee Promise have demonstrated success in quasi-experimental studies. Carruthers and Fox (2016) conducted a difference in differences examination using longitudinal data from the Tennessee Department of Education. By utilizing 100% of the population and matched samples, while controlling for gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status (free lunch qualification), ACT scores, end of course scores and propensity score matching, they were also able to suggest causation. Their findings suggest that the Tennessee initiatives caused minority students to apply and attend college in higher numbers. They also saw statistically significant positive gains in two-year college enrollment and second year attendance. As much as 66-71% of the college increases were attributable to the initiatives (Carruthers and Fox, 2016). Surprising findings in this study included the fact that these students also completed more college credits than students who did not receive the Tennessee Promise and this held true even when the top 10% of all students were eliminated from analysis. The program also assigned unpaid mentors who helped the students navigate the federal financial aid process. The majority of the Tennessee Promise students qualified for financial aid,

suggesting that they were from families with low expected family contributions (Carruthers and Fox, 2016). The Tennessee Promise Program appears to be using micro-agents to impact change.

Table 1. Promise Initiatives

Promise-Like Program	Research	Method, Variables	Results	Strengths & Weaknesses	Qualifications
21 st Century Scholars Program	Dynarski, 2000; Toutkoushian, Hossler, DesJardins, McCall, Canche, 2015	Longitudinal study; multiple regression	21 st Century Scholar Program only increased access by small percentage (2.3%) and then only to community college	Multiple variables, controlled for missing data; previous studies indicated it was far more successful	Not technically a Promise Program because it is not community restricted
Georgia Hope & TELS	Dynarski, 2000; Suggs, 2016	Statistical Analysis (comparison of census data and IPEDS data); Georgia Higher Education data system	Free college initiatives matter, financial incentives matter, but financial assistance alone may widen gap between lowest and highest socioeconomic students	Descriptive statistics without comparison data	Not technically a Promise Program because it is not community restricted and merit based.
El Dorado Promise (2007)	Ash, 2015	Longitudinal study, Odds ratio analysis; examined 5 cohorts of	Significant at the 99% level increases in math and literacy	Dissertation, additional research in progress	First-dollar scholarship; continuous enrollment in EDSD; scholarship

		3 rd through 8 th graders for graduation information	(+.078 and +.067 respectively), .892 odds ratio of graduating, however Promise students were 14% less likely to graduate (statistically insignificant)		capped at tuition of most expensive university in AR
Kalamazoo Promise (2005)	Andrews, DesJardins and Ranchhod, 2009	Quasi-experimental, statistical differences; 430,702 students studied at 591 high schools; also studied ACT test-takers in MI from 1996-2006	Significant increases in college application (.01), increased ACT test takers, increase in sending ACT results to colleges, increased college attendance, increased college readiness	Human Capital theory; large sample size, rigorous data collection	First-dollar scholarship; requires continuous enrollment in KPS; for MI public universities only; 2.0 GPA and 12 credits per semester in college to continue the scholarship
Kalamazoo Promise (2005)	Bartik, Hershbeina and Lachowsk a, 2015	Quasi-experimental, longitudinal cohort samples, statistical analyses of differences; 9 th through 12 th grades from 2003-	slight decrease in suspensions (-.058) and detentions (-.069); increase in GPA (+.587); significant increase in college	large sample size, rigorous data collection; replicated by other researchers; utilized demographic controls	First-dollar scholarship; requires continuous enrollment in KPS; for MI public universities only; 2.0 GPA and 12 credits per semester in college to

		2008; KPS and National Clearinghouse Student data from 2003-2013	enrollment (.01) and credits attempted (significant at .05 level)		continue the scholarship
New Haven Promise (2008)	Gonzales et al, 2014	Survey, focus groups, DOE education results, census and district data (numbers and standardized testing), linear Spline analysis, regression discontinuity, National Student Clearinghouse data 2006-2013	Slight decrease in high school drop-out rate (-.051), slight gains in math and literacy, but these did not persist through high school; increase in post secondary enrollment but null on persistence	Matched district level data (not students specific), only used GPA for eligibility (not as sensitive as if covariates had been controlled for)	Merit based; requires 40 hours community service, 3.0 GPA; first dollar tuition at private CT colleges
Oklahoma Promise	Mendoza and Mendez, 2012	Longitudinal, multi-modal statistical evaluation using controls for self-selection bias, fixed effects, within-subjects effects, IV: financial	The Oklahoma Promise was a predictor of persistence and this persistence impact was different than with other kinds of financial aid and more pronounced in the	IV: financial aid, financial aid by income, financial aid by race/ethnicity DV: Oklahoma Promise student persistence and retention	Eligibility limited to OK residents; must enroll in 8 th -10 th grades; EFC must be under \$55k per year; last dollar

		aid, financial aid by income, financial aid by race/ethnicity DV: Oklahoma Promise student persistence and retention Cov: income, GPA, institution, grade level	freshman to sophomore year of college (when students are most vulnerable), racial/ethnic persistence was varied	Cov: income, GPA, institution, grade level	
Oregon Promise (Fall, 2016)	Higher Education Coordinating Commission, 2017; 2017a	Descriptive Statistics-legislative report	Initial results show that high school transition to community college rates are up 18.5%, but four year rates are down 2-3%. Of the 10,459 eligible students that applied, 6,745 actually enrolled and received the grant. 53% of recipients were not eligible for	N/A	Eligibility is limited to students from families with an EFC of \$20,000 or less- change in 2017 based upon expected state funding shortage; Last dollar award. Mean of \$645 p/award; Covers first two years of community college; Other requirements include being a recent Oregon high school graduate or GED recipient (or demonstrated

			Pell based on EFC.		hardship, military service). High school grads must have earned at least a cumulative 2.5 GPA; middle-dollar approach
Pittsburgh Promise (2006)	Iriti, Bickel, and Kaufman, 2012	Mixed Methods design; quantitative analysis, logistical regression in retention and persistence rates (controlling for background characteristics), qualitative data coding and descriptive statistics; 2,597 students across three cohorts	Pittsburgh Promise impacted retention and completion via various success measures-created ecosystem of student supports	Other researchers were able to replicate positive results, systems based theory	Last-dollar scholarship; continuous enrollment from K-12 (nothing if enroll in 10th or later); graduate with 2.5 GPA minimum; 90% or higher attendance; used at any accredited postsecondary institution in PA; must enroll full-time and have 2.0 or higher GPA
Pittsburgh Promise (2006)	Bozick, Gonzales and Engberg, 2015	Longitudinal Study, National Student Clearinghouse Data 2006-2010,	Slightly increased college enrollment (+.15 logit coefficient), significantly	Replicated results	Last-dollar scholarship; continuous enrollment from K-12 (nothing if enroll in 10th or later); graduate

			significant impact on enrollment and persistence (+.03 and +.05 respectively)		with 2.5 GPA minimum; 90% or higher attendance; used at any accredited postsecondary institution in PA; must enroll full-time and have 2.0 or higher GPA
Tennessee Promise (2009)	Carruthers and Fox, 2016; Pallais, 2009; Sutton, 2015	Quasi-experimental, matched samples, propensity matching; differences statistical analyses; Multiple variables including gender, scores, socio-economic status,	Gains in on-time graduation (significant at (.001); slight increase in credits earned; increase in college enrollment, significant negative effects on four year enrollment	Replicated by several researchers and studies	Last dollar scholarship; graduate from Knox County high school, enroll in an in-state community college; research conducted on earliest version of the Tennessee Promise (Knox Achieves) and has since been expanded and modified
Various	Swanson, Watson, Ritter and Nichols, 2016	Review of all Promise Programs	Categorized 80 Promise Programs designed to increase access, provide financial assistance and spur college going	Excellent for understanding range and definitions	

			<p>culture. Categorization consisted of place based requirements, application process, funding process (last or first dollar), and how the Promise grant was supported (funders, lottery, state).</p>		
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What is clear from this literature review is that governments and external systems are exerting increasing pressure to pay for one or more years of college via Promise Programs. (Most of the Promise Programs are designed to pay for the first two years of college to make a system of free education, K-14, free for all students). This pressure leaves educational institutions confused in that Pell grants already cover much of the first two years for students from low-socio-economic statuses (Dynarski, 2000). Confusion stifles collective ambition and emotional contagion (Seymour, 2016). Are Promise Programs designed to lure students from four year institutions? Sort out students via the “cooling effect”? Or, are Promise Programs designed to change the national culture by recognition, access and completion? The goals and mechanisms for which these goals occur are still unclear.

Clearly some Promise Programs develop from an interest in economic development, particularly for those communities that have lost industries such as Oregon's loss of the timber industry. They may be targeted to encourage current families and draw new families into an area for economic growth. Whatever the goals and aspirations of the government and other external partners, we do know that college is beneficial in a multitude of ways for those who attend, persist and complete (Mayhew et.al, 2016).

Do Promise program work? The early results (e.g. TELS and Georgia Hope) were tepid at best (Dynarski, 2000; Pallais, 2009). The Georgia Hope did appear to have an impact on access and students from middle (or high) socio-economic statuses but widened the gap for the poorest students (Dynarski, 2000). Other initiatives (e.g. the District of Columbia grant, Oklahoma Higher Education Access program, and Rising Star in Texas) have demonstrated some increases in access for the most vulnerable students (Sullivan, 2010). There is also some research that suggests free college, for merit behaviors, appears to have a small impact on college attendance and is more successful than Pell grants and federal financial aid alone (Dynarski, 2000; Sullivan, 2010). Promise grants, without merit or competitive application, appear to be even more effective at getting students in the door with additional findings that suggest they are useful for getting students ready for college level courses without remediation. Though limited, these studies are promising.

Even more promising is that the more successful Promise Programs appear to have considered the eco-system surrounding vulnerable students (i.e. Tennessee and

Pittsburgh Promise). Impactful interventions that lead to student persistence and completion include effective advising, first year experiences, faculty and community engagement, college preparedness classes and high expectations for college attendance and performance in secondary and early post-secondary education. Creating a system of free college that includes interventions that maximize access, retention and completion is key. Further, these ideas must be institutionalized across campuses via external and internal actors who are invested in changing and improving the culture to maximize student learning. Administrators can write and implement policy. Community colleges are built on the notion that organizational leaders are decision makers. Yet, Neo-Institutional theory suggests that pressure exerted by rational, functional and reasonable choices supported by internal and external actors results in change that, can over time, become institutionalized (Meyer, 2008). These actors consist of both interested and non-interested, active and non-active people (and groups) that are influenced by other external institutions in a co-created and co-existing waving web of influence (Meyer, 2008).

Gaps and Saturation Points

While both quantitative and qualitative data are admittedly limited, most Promise initiatives appear to increase access, attendance and belief that college could be a reality (Carruthers and Fox, 2016). Promise initiatives that have been successful in terms of retention and completion have created cultures and systems that wrap-around and support vulnerable students. Further, they both engage multiple actors, agency and create a culture of student success. These institutions then institutionalize change via changes in

culture and the norms under which this culture is created and operates. Yet many times, this system breaks down and does not occur. Why?

There is also limited research on community college decision-making and governance. What little research exists does not address decision-making in response to issues of access, under-funded mandates or resource scarcity. However, the research does suggest that institutional culture and external pressures play a role in the decision-making process. Several studies looked at leadership teams including presidents, vice presidents, deans and faculty as bureaucratic policy makers. These studies suggested that as policies trickled down, and when they were embraced by multiple actors, they resulted in institutional change.

Summary of Literature and Overall Strengths and Weaknesses

The review of the literature above provides an overview of the history of community college, access issues, retention issues, financial implications, decision-making theory (governance models), Promise Programs and the state of empirical research on the topics listed above. It is acknowledged that though an exhaustive methodological review was completed, including a study of over 1100 articles, there was a significant lack of research on many of these important topics. What research exists consists mainly of theoretical propositions, quantitative surveys and position papers (opinion based from practitioners, foundations or national agencies). While there is a dearth of research on student success, interventions, and teaching, how institutions make use of this information to change and improve institutional cultures of success, remains virtually unstudied.

The research that does exist on college decision-making and governance does not include decision-making in response to free college policies. More research is needed. This research will fill an important gap in the literature as well as serve as a call for additional research on these important topics. If it is college leadership that is responsible for setting the vision, how engaging sufficient actors to drive change must be understood. How do leaders manage this without research to inform this process?

The goal of this study is to examine process and to develop an in depth understanding of a complex phenomenon; decision-making at the community college level in response to the Oregon Promise. Of interest, is how community colleges decide upon student support strategies and what factors influence this decision. Theory suggests that decisions should be made in response to best practices for student success. Theory also suggests that implementation should occur via the momentum generated by multiple actors to institutionalize a culture of student retention and completion for all students- including those that are the most vulnerable. Historically, this has played out via bureaucratic mandates from the government, with little motivation or funding given to develop external (or internal) pressure. It is unknown how this truly plays out in practice. Does this occur? Did this occur in response to the mandates of the Oregon Promise? Do school decision makers consider cost, best practice, culture, homeostasis, the impact of change, none or all of the above? This is the focus of this case study.

“If you do not know where you are going, any road will take you there.”

~Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1865)

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the inductive logic methodology employed in this study on the role of decision-making in response to Oregon Promise. It outlines the qualitative research perspective, specifically the instrumental case study, as well as the logistical reasoning behind methodological decisions. Next it describes the methods of data collection and analysis. It then discusses my role and positionality as the researcher. This research was designed to understand reality as constructed by the participants of the study (ontological), get as close to the topic as possible for shared understanding (epistemological), openly discuss values that shape the narrative (axiological), uses the language of qualitative inquiry (rhetorical) and uses an inductive logic model (methodological). The two over-arching interpretive frameworks of social constructionism and critical social theory frame this work.

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in several ways. A major primary difference is the philosophy itself. Qualitative research approaches research from a constructivist approach and maintains that knowledge is co-constructed with research participants. Quantitative research in contrast maintains that knowledge is discoverable and observable and takes a more positivist approach (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research is concerned with how people make sense of reality, how reality is constructed and how individual realities combine to make a sense of the whole (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative research also engages the researcher differently than quantitative research. In quantitative research information is measured and quantified. In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument. The researcher interviews, questions, considers, observes, conducts fieldwork, organizes and makes sense of what is learned (Creswell, 2007). This study follows in the tradition of Stake (2006), because of his commitment to the constructionist perspective of a co-constructed reality (Yazan, 2015).

Guiding Research Questions

RQ 1) How has the Oregon Promise policy impacted mid-sized Oregon community colleges?

RQ 2) What interventions have colleges selected to address the needs of Oregon Promise students? Why?

RQ 3) How have colleges brought to bear institution decision-making in selecting the interventions developed to address stipulations of the Oregon Promise?

Research Design and Approach

Qualitative analysis is appropriate when a holistic understanding is needed or when there may be differing contexts and opinions involved (Stake, 2006). The empirical research on community college suggests the relevance of multiple constructs including bureaucratic, collegial, political, cybernetic, data based, contingent and emergent decision-making (Cox, 2005; Tierney, 2008). The literature also suggests relationships between decision-making, external pressures and college culture. However, these relationships are not currently understood from the academic standpoint. This suggests

that multiple constructs are involved and need to be examined to understand the phenomena. Qualitative research is ideal for studying a complex topic (e.g. human behavior) in its natural setting (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2006). Qualitative analysis is also appropriate when the existing research is limited (Creswell, 2007). To date, there is no empirical evidence that exists on decision-making in response to unfunded or under-funded mandates at community colleges. Until the process is understood it is difficult if not impossible to measure. As a holistic examination of the community college decision-making process in response to the Oregon Promise is needed and limited literature exists to provide answers, a qualitative approach is appropriate.

For this research, I selected an instrumental case study as the strategic approach because my purpose was to understand the how, what and why of institutional decision-making in response to the Oregon Promise. An instrumental case study is particularly useful for understanding a process that is not well known or understood and is unique given its parameters (Merriam, 1998). Typically, a case study is bound by time, location, construct and/or process (Yin, 2009). In this research study, the case is bound by the type of college (community college), location of the college (Oregon), size of the college (mid-sized) and the fact that each college examined is subject to the state-wide Oregon Promise policy that required interventions designed to facilitate student success without dollars to sustain new processes or personnel (HB 4076). Eisenhardt (1989) recommends that multi-site case studies be used to understand the information through multiple lenses. Utilizing multiple sites also helps to prevent the researcher from drawing conclusions based upon one institution that may possess unique characteristics not initially evident

(Eisenhardt, 1989). In this case, a multiple-site case study approach allows for multiple case comparisons, cross case analysis, lessons learned, recommendations based upon findings and increased “validity” (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009).

There are both inherent strengths and weaknesses within the case study approach. Utilizing multiple methods of data collection, including in-depth interviews, written correspondence and document analysis allows for triangulation and increased validity addressing methodological weakness (Yin, 2009; Stake, 2006). Theoretical grounding is also both a strength and a weakness. Theory provides a story, an explanation, of why events occur and guidance for interpreting results. Theory facilitates data collection, analysis and the degree to which results can be analytically generalized to theory (Yin, 2009). However, there is always the danger of theory biasing the researcher towards viewing the results in a particular way or through a particular lens. By exercising reflexivity, carefully thinking about the results, asking questions in different ways and imagining both how theory may and may not apply, this can be managed successfully (Stake, 2006).

The current state of literature reveals a great deal of theory but little understanding of how theory translates to practice and process. The results of this study are useful for explaining how the Oregon Promise policy influenced institutional actions, behaviors and culture. Results also describe the impact of the policy on institutional decision-making, illustrating links between Oregon Promise and implementations and enlightening readers to the state of influence. When done correctly with attention to detail and rigor, the case study is a valid method of inquiry.

Positionality

In qualitative research, it is important to position the researcher in the study. Positioning the researcher in the study serves the dual purpose of identifying bias and lending credibility and expertise to the process. Community college is a passion for me and my research seeks to inform the greater work of community colleges to make these intuitions the very best they can be. Over twenty years ago, I came to community college as a lower socioeconomic, single mother who was unsure of what I was doing and what I wanted to be. I was fortunate to be eligible for financial aid, yet navigating the financial aid process was cumbersome and difficult. Despite the challenges, I graduated and continued in my education slowly making changes and bettering my life. Throughout this process, the fact that college was culturally, sociologically and economically valuable became ingrained.

I eventually became a social worker and worked for over twelve years with at risk populations including adult prisoners, adjudicated juvenile delinquents, and people who had, or were at risk of, developmental disabilities. Working with vulnerable populations taught me that education could be a challenge for those not academically or socially prepared for the rigor and demands of education. These experiences grounded me in the difficulties that students face and strengthened my belief that every student who comes to community colleges deserves to achieve their goals and experience all the benefits that college affords. Working with vulnerable populations also taught me that education could be a challenge for those not academically or socially prepared for the rigor and demands of education. These experiences grounded me in the difficulties that students face and

strengthened my belief that every student who comes to community colleges deserves to achieve their goals and experience all the benefits that college affords. My motivation is discovering how we set up cultures of success for all students. In my position of social worker, I gained relationship skills and became adept at interviewing people while helping to keep them focused, comfortable and honest. I also became skilled at listening, repeating what was heard and providing illustrative examples of what I heard to establish meaning and rapport. These skills were utilized in the data collection process.

Almost twelve years ago, I decided to trade in my social worker role for that of an educator. I started by teaching at a four year, open access, university on an Air Force base. This experience revealed the challenges faced by educators in the classroom and exposed me to a new population of students that also found academic and social challenges as they attempted to balance work, education and family obligations. As I improved my own educational skills, andragogy and passion for education, I assumed a leadership role as the Campus Center Director. In the following years, I gained experience and promoted to positions of higher authority and decision-making responsibility. These positions included Director of Student Services at an elite four-year university, Academic Director at this same elite four-year university, Director of Student Success at a community college, Director of Academic Success at said community college, Director of Lifelong Learning at this community college, Dean of Curriculum and Instruction at an Oregon community college and now as the Chief Academic Officer at a small Oregon community college. Throughout this journey, I learned a great deal about myself. First, I learned that I am passionate about community college as it

incorporates my love for both education and social work and allows me to positively influence the lives of vulnerable student populations. Second, I learned that education changes lives. Third, I learned that students who are not prepared struggle. I also learned that institutions struggle to make decisions and create solutions for students due to scarcity of resources. How we can do this better is important to me. My motivation is one of social justice evidenced by a desire to increase the success of vulnerable populations through education and leadership.

All of this has brought me to this place, a place where I am motivated to examine how decision-making is driven and impacted by the philosophy of student success and access. I know that as a college decision maker I desire to implement best practices for all students on a grand scale. However, I do not do this alone or in isolation. I also know that in the process of decision-making my team faces challenges such as systemic resistance to change, scarcity of resources and cultural barriers to implementing real feasible change. From my own position, I know that understanding these issues and finding answers can make a difference to other groups facing the same real-life challenges. My desire to uncover answers, my own experience and my positionality drive this work. Throughout this study, I worked to acknowledge, recognize and keep my own position in mind so that I could present the most accurate results possible. My positionality is a factor, both a potential benefit and liability in examining this topic. Bias is inescapable in any qualitative research, but ensuring that the bias benefits the intended population becomes a stance and has value (Gitlin, Siegel and Boru, 1989). This work is guided by a desire to implement best practices for students and yet is also guided by policy making,

information gathering practices, decisions and resources. How policy mandates come to life through these complex social relationships and decisions, governance, is the underlying question of this paper.

Context of the Study

According to Holstein and Gubrium (2004) all research is conducted within a contextual environment consisting of both distal and proximal factors. Qualitative inquiry attempts to describe that context. Affordable College is on the national agenda and Free College is a policy approach proposed by political candidates to meet that goal. Also on the national agenda is public accountability and measuring the success of community college in terms of graduates and economic value (Office of the President, 2015; Spellings, 2006). More and more governmental entities are implementing free college policies as concerns about access and equity are discussed on the national front (Office of the President, 2015). This has moved the discussion to a state and local level as more states and cities implement free college policies.

At a more proximal level, free college has arrived in Oregon via the Oregon Promise. Oregon has the third lowest high school graduation rate in the country at just 74%, which is about 10 percentage points lower than the national average (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Oregon has also experienced a down turn in the state economy with the diminishing logging and construction industries. In many ways, Oregon has struggled to find an independent identity. Because of this struggle, the Oregon legislature is demanding an educated populace. In addition to tuition funding this policy requires community colleges to support Oregon Promise students in their success

and completion efforts. The legislature is willing to fund free college to some extent, however, they expect colleges to support and retain students successfully. The Oregon legislature has not provided definitive answers for how to retain and successfully complete Oregon Promise students. Nor has the legislature yet provided additional dollars to implement additional supports. Given the lack of certainty and direction, it is important to examine how Oregon community colleges respond to this mandate as it is an important conversation on the local, state, and national level.

Population, Sample and Sampling Strategy

Institutions

For this study, I wanted to gain multiple perspectives for maximum understanding (Eidenhardt, 1989). To begin with, I knew I would be looking at schools impacted by the Oregon Promise (see Appendix A). Informally from conversations at state meetings with other instructional administrators, I knew that schools received fewer students than expected. For this reason, I elected not to look at very small or small schools as they did not have enough influx of students to adjust operations. Previous economic research indicates that changes in culture are more likely to occur at medium sized institutions as they are sensitive to change (Amah and Nwuche, 2013). Thus, the terms “two year, medium” and “Oregon” were fed into the Carnegie Foundation Classification System (2016) which has been well established as a classification system in the literature. The result was four mid-sized Oregon community colleges which were then purposefully selected by size and location as study institutions. This sample is unique in that it represents 100% or the entire population of mid-sized Oregon community colleges (see

Table 2 below). Stake (2006) recommends that no fewer than three and no more than ten case studies be looked at a time for maximum interactivity, so this sample met a field best practice. Three additional questions were asked to determine case selection a) Is the case relevant to the whole? b) Do the cases provide good diversity across contexts, and, c) Do the cases provide good opportunities to learn about complexity and contexts (Stake, 2006)? After reviewing demographic data, intent of participants to further research in this area (not personal or institutional gain) and careful consideration, the answer to each question was determined to be affirmative.

In summary, executive leadership from four mid-sized Oregon community colleges were interviewed to determine how Oregon Promise impacted the institution, what interventions were selected for Oregon Promise students and why (see Table 3 below). It is acknowledged that executive leadership may result in a more bureaucratic construction of reality. I attempted to mitigate this through triangulation of the literature, college culture, multiple interviewees and personal reflexivity. Though all cases were mid-sized Oregon community colleges, they differed in size, location, governance structure and approach they took to implementing Oregon Promise and HB 4076.

School 1

School 1 is one of the oldest community colleges in Oregon and was established in 1949 on a high-school campus. The third largest in size, it is unique in that it has on-campus housing. This is helpful given the schools five rural locations (a main campus and four satellite locations) that cover a large geographic area in the heart of the state. Though third in size, it had the second largest number of Oregon Promise students. The

governance structure consists of the President, Vice President of Instruction, Student Services Dean and multiple governing committees. The primary responsibility of the Oregon Promise initiatives fell to the Student Services Dean, though this may be partially attributed to the fact that the Vice President of Instruction was very new to the role and institution. Both interviewees held terminal degrees. The Student Services Dean who was primarily responsible for the decisions examined in this study, had over two decades of administrative experience and formal education in college leadership. The newer Vice President of Instruction had six years of administrative experience having come up through the ranks as a faculty member.

This school decided to tackle student “onboarding” a couple of years ago. In cross campus groups, they decided to re-work orientation, their college success course and advising model. This work was initially done in preparation for a TAACT grant that they did not (initially) receive. When the school was awarded the original Oregon Promise money, they used it to pilot the interventions they had previously designed but that had not received the TAACT grant funding to implement. The second year of Oregon Promise, when there was no additional support funding, the school was fortunately awarded the TAACT grant and ended up scaling up and sustaining the work the Oregon Promise started. They are currently planning for sustaining this work through a college trust or entrepreneurial funding.

School 2

School 2 was established in 1966 and was the largest of the four schools studied. It is located on the outskirts of a major city and is unique in that the Vice President covers

both Academic Instruction and Student Services which is a huge job. School 2 was also unique in that it had a slight majority of male students though the average age of its students was comparable to other schools. School 2 is considered urban and exists just outside of the largest Oregon city. It saw the third largest number of Oregon Promise students. School 2 has done a remarkable job collecting data on its Oregon Promise students and they seem excited to learn about the impact, if any, this data will demonstrate. Governance at School 2 is stable, though at the time of this writing they were amid a Presidential search due to an upcoming retirement of their long-term President. The Vice President had been at the school two years but had 16 years of experience in higher education leadership. His terminal degree was in the field of science and he had come up through the ranks as a faculty member.

School 2 is unique in that it has one Vice President who oversees both instruction and student services. It does have a Director of Housing who has assisted with Oregon Promise work. In terms of interventions, School 2 hired an Academic Advisor and created a mandatory online orientation for Oregon Promise students specifically. In addition, they created a space for Oregon Promise students to come for additional support on career advising and other opportunities. The first year they had two positions for Oregon Promise students to go to for questions, but resources barriers in state funding meant these roles were discontinued in year two. All Oregon Promise students at School 2 are also required to take a student success course.

School 3

School 3 was also established in 1966 and it is the second largest of the studied schools. Though it had a mission and values statement, it did not have a vision statement. This school had the highest number of Oregon Promise students and was also located on the outskirts of a large city. School three is unique in that its population was considerably younger than the other schools. This may have something to do with the very close relationship this school has with a four-year university in the same community and likely experiences student swirl (students who move back and forth between community college and the university). This school has benefitted from extremely stable leadership with both interviewees having been employed there for well over a decade. Both administrators had over two decades of experience and terminal degrees in college administration specific to their roles.

This school was uniquely challenged by the Oregon Promise in that they had a very successful 5th year high school senior program in place with their secondary partners. Oregon Promise funding halted this program and then turned around and funded Oregon Promise for the same population of students. So, while their numbers for Oregon Promise were impactful, they saw an almost equal drop in their 5th year seniors program. In addition, this school had already decided to implement Guided Pathways including the restructuring of advising, student support, orientation and structured program maps. For this reason, they made no changes in response to Oregon Promise (they were already doing the required work effectively).

School 4

School 4 is both the youngest and smallest of the four colleges studied. It is in rural Southern Oregon which feels isolated from much of the state and has a distinctly conservative population in comparison. This school saw significantly less Oregon Promise students than the rest of the other mid-sized schools and the smallest amount of the schools studied. The population here is slightly older and predominately female. While all the examined school budgets were similar, this school had far less income from tuition and fees. It also had significantly more adjunct faculty (though adjunct numbers from School 2 were not available) and less full-time faculty. School 4 had been impacted by a recent Reduction in Force (RIF) and experienced changes in administration during this study. The two interviewees did not hold terminal degrees but did have over five years of administrative experience. The Vice President of Student Services held a degree in Counseling and had come up through the ranks of faculty. The Vice President of Instruction had extensive secondary school experience and experience as an administrator in post-secondary at the community college level. School 4 responded to Oregon Promise by mandating the college success course that was already required for first-time, full-time freshman students. It was a solution that was affordable and already in place for the population impacted by the Oregon Promise. They were also able to use some of the funding to hire a part time advisor, though this was not sustained through the second year due to funding.

School Sample Summary

All schools had sports programs, were accredited by the Northwest Commission of Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) and were active in statewide initiatives. They were similar in size, number of programs and operating budgets. They each had multiple locations (main campuses and satellite campus locations). Each of the schools had interventions used to satisfy the requirements of HB 4076. It was also very clear that all leaders were educated, experienced and truly desired to create an environment where students were successful, retained, completed and benefitted from their college experience.

Table 2. Institutional Profiles

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4
Year Established	1949	1966	1966	1970
Mission	...promotes student success and community enrichment by providing quality, accessible, lifelong educational opportunities.	To serve the people of the college district with high-quality education and training opportunities that are accessible to all students, adaptable to changing needs and accountable to the community we serve.	To engage in an education that enables all of us to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from the cultural richness and economic vitality of our communities.	... provides quality learning opportunities for students to achieve their goals and supports the vitality of our communities.
Vision	Transforming lives through learning	Creating lifetime opportunities	See Values	... is a premiere learning

		for success through responsive education.		college that transforms, strengthens and inspires.
Values	Learning, Diversity, Innovation, Collaboration and Partnership, Integrity, Accessibility, Sustainability	Themes: Academic Transfer, Career and Technical Education, Technical Skills, Lifelong Learning	Opportunity, Excellence, Inclusiveness, Learning, Engagement	Integrity, Collaboration, Inclusion. Stewardship, Courage
Enrollment (FTE)	5,148	6,781	5,993	4,514
Enrollment (Headcount)	16,504 8,967 credit students	26,018 14,286 credit students	19,484 11,855 credit students	16,379 9,606 credit students
Classification	Rural	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Oregon Promise Attendees	566	512	637	324
Males/Females	54.7% females, 41.3% males	51% male, 49% female	57% female, 43% male	57% female, 43% male
Average Age	30.4	31.5	18-25	32.02 (and declining)
FT Faculty	130	136	135	81
PT Faculty	221	Unavailable, estimated at 200	211	482
Campus Locations	5	3	3	4
Programs (#)	100	95	115	98
Tuition & Fee Revenue	17.3 million	20.1 million	23.9 million	13 million
Operating Requirements	55.7 million	50 million	55.7 million	40.6 million

*All data taken from college website for 2016-2017 year, except for budget which was for 2017-2018.

Pilot Site

The pilot study took place during the first three months of data collection. Because I worked at a mid-sized community college impacted by Oregon Promise policy, I had a solid understanding of the system and how it may have been impacted. This expertise was used in the co-construction of reality. I also had a specific level of comfort and understanding of School 4 as this is where I worked. For these reasons, School 4 served as a “pilot site” for this research. The initial pilot was a focus group discussion with the Executive Team which consisted of the President, Vice President of Instruction, Vice President of Student Services, Vice President of College Services, five academic Deans (of which I was one), the Chief Financial Officer, the Director of the Foundation, the Director of Marketing, and the Director of Human Resources. It was quickly evident that most members did not have an in-depth understanding of how Oregon Promise impacted the college nor did the group form the decision-making body for these initiatives. For that reason, a decision was made to not continue with the focus group approach.

I next asked the Vice President of Instruction and Vice President of Student Services, the participants from the focus group who had the most information on the Oregon Promise requirements, who was instrumental in deciding and enacting the decisions made in response to the Oregon Promise. Both stated that they were responsible given their positions, for developing and enforcing policy regarding Oregon Promise. Thus, the methodology was switched from a focus group format to an in-depth interview with the participants who had the most knowledge and were responsible for the decisions

made in response to the Oregon Promise. Because my interest was in decision-making and governance, this was appropriate. Prior to interviews at each subsequent school, I reached out to the Vice President of Instruction and Student Affairs via email (Appendix B) and asked them to send me the names of anyone who may have been involved in making the decisions about the Oregon Promise initiative. Each participant indicated that I had the correct participants. For that reason, I did not seek to interview additional participants. Initially concerned that my interviewees may lend a bureaucratic lens to this research, I went back to the literature. Tierney's decision-making theory acknowledges that decisions are made by those in the position by role to do so. However, this does not mean that the decisions translate into cultural change or action (Tierney, 2008). My interest was to understand how those in positions of leadership engaged in decision-making which fit with this decision.

The pilot helped me to refine my interview questions and ensured that they were relevant, appropriate and comprehensive. Open ended questions were selected to allow the participants a format in which to share rich, detailed, description (Patton, 2002). This level of detail is important for identification of themes, assertions and future analysis. In addition to gleaning as much detail as possible, it was crucial that I not lead or project bias during the interviews. I recorded each interview listening to the recording prior to the next interview to identify areas of bias and make corrections on technique leading to increased credibility. As a professional in my field I routinely conduct interviews and thus this instrumentation was determined to be acceptable.

Table 3. Decision Maker Profiles

	Highest Degree Attained	Role	Time In Role	Time at School	Role in Decision-making & Implementation	Years on Job	Prior Exp.
# 1							
B J	PhD-Geology	Instruction Vice President	1 year	1 year	Very new to position, self-reported did not have direct impact.	6 years	Faculty, admin.
A M	PhD-Comm. College Leadership	Student Services Dean	10 years	20 years	Responsible for implementing and tracking any, and all, changes implemented resulting from the Oregon Promise initiative (coordination of students and employees)	20 years	Manager Director, registrar
# 2							
D P	PhD-English	Vice President of Instruction & Student Services	2 years	2 years	Ultimately responsible for strategic vision/planning and implementation of initiatives	16 years	Faculty, Department Chair
# 3							
A B	EdD-Community College Leadership	Vice President of Academic Affairs and Workforce	2 years	28 Years	Limited-Student Services carried the load on this initiative	28 years	Faculty, Dept Chair, Admin

		Development					
B C	PhD- Higher Education Administration and Student Affairs	Vice President of Student Affairs	8 years	18 years	Responsible for implementing and tracking any, and all, changes implemented resulting from the Oregon Promise initiative (coordination of students and employees)	33 years	Faculty, Student Service, Admin
# 4							
K G	MS- Education Policy, Foundation and Admin (1999)	Vice President of Instruction	5 years	9 years	Responsible to faculty and students for any academic changes made as result of decisions, oversees freshman experience programming	9 years	17 years of exp as k-12 admin
K E	MA- Psychology (1988)	Vice President of Student Services	9 years	20 years	Responsible for implementing and tracking any, and all, changes implemented resulting from the Oregon Promise initiative (coordination of students and employees)	20+ years	Counsel or and Faculty

Interviewees

The literature review suggests that decision-making at the community college level occurs within a team environment (Callery, 2012; Kerrigan, 2015). For this reason, I elected to contact each school in advance to determine their specific decision makers (see Appendix B). My initial plan was to meet with a wide array of decision makers across campus in a focus group interview. The pilot study changed this plan and I elected to conduct individual interviews with senior administrators from each mid-sized Oregon community college instead. Ultimately this research included interviews with seven Vice Presidents of mid-sized Oregon community colleges. These administrators were self-identified as decision makers regarding policy, procedures and interventions in response to the Oregon Promise. In total, the interviewed participants had over 132 years of experience in college administration and were primarily responsible for turning legislation into local practice at their institutions. The interviews were one to two hours in length and followed by written questions to clarify needed information and obtain material for triangulation. I also collected a resume or curricula vita from each participant to describe the participants (see Table 3 above). In keeping with suggestions from Seymour (2016), I also collected each institution's mission, vision and values statements as they may be useful for shedding light on institutional culture or guiding principles and could be used for triangulation.

Data Collection

The first step in this qualitative case study was to gain the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which was completed in December of 2016. As a

decision maker in the Oregon community college system, I had access to other community college decision makers. I also secured the support of my President and Vice President of Student Services who offered to act as a gatekeeper and make introductions where and if needed. I attended a quarterly meeting of all Chief Instructional Administrators (CIA). This forum provided another venue for me to approach subjects and plan the actual interviews. After initially speaking to each Vice President face to face and explaining my project, I secured verbal consent to participate. Only then did I send them an emailed letter of introduction to the study in October of 2017 (Appendix B).

The timeframe for collecting data for this study was from October of 2017 through May of 2018. At the interviews themselves, I started with an introduction to the study and read the permission forms prior to having them signed (see Appendix C). I was very transparent about the fact that a motivated reader would likely be able to track down who each interviewee was. Each participant indicated that they were not concerned about this possibility. Still, I had two copies signed and one was left with each interviewee. Once permissions were obtained multiple means of data collection were used (Creswell, 2007). Data included five types of information;

1. *Audio recordings. I started each interview with the interview script (Appendix D). The script was used as a guide as I conducted a gently guided conversation of which I was a participant but attentive to the lead and direction of the interviewee (Savin-Baden, 2009). During the interviews notes were taken on the script and answers to the guiding questions were documented (Appendix D).*

2. *Immediately following each interview, I completed a personal observation using an analysis guide (Appendix E). This guide, developed by Holstein and Gubrium (2004), has been widely used in the field as a means of journaling for reflexivity.*
3. *After the interview process I collected a curriculum vitae from each interviewed administrator and recorded observations about this on the documentation guide (Appendix G). This form and its questions have been recommended by field experts (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). In addition to the collected documents, each college website was reviewed with attention to background information, the most recent budget report and census, the mission statement, vision and values statement (Seymour, 2016).*
4. *Finally, any unresolved questions were completed via phone follow-up calls using the journaling form (Appendix E) and a written verification (Appendix F). Data was collected and checked with members until saturation and agreed upon accuracy was achieved.*

Instrumentation

Interview questions were designed with the goal of encouraging collaborative inquiry and discussion (Savin-Baden, 2000). They started with positive general questions first and gradually worked towards the more specific and potentially concerning questions (see Table 4 below). The initial process, questions and interview probes were reviewed by a panel of my peers prior to use. In addition to the interview questions, I utilized a moderator script to help with consistency (Savin-Baden, 2000). I also designed a reflexive instrument, a written questionnaire, to address potential concerns or problems

that may not have arisen in the initial interview conversations (Appendix G). All participants reported a high level of comfort with the interview process.

Table 4. Instrumentation and Specification

Research Questions	Questions/Probes	Justification
<p>RQ1: How has the Oregon Promise policy impacted mid-sized Oregon community colleges?</p>	<p>When did you start thinking about the Oregon Promise? (Who did you think would take advantage of OP? Who has? Research?)</p> <p>What, if anything, excited you about the idea?</p> <p>What, if anything, worried/concerned you? (Economic concerns)</p> <p>How has this impacted the way you work and plan?</p> <p>Who are the key decision makers about student success at this college?</p> <p>How would you describe the leadership process at your school, and how is this seen in the Oregon Promise intervention planning?</p>	<p>This question gets at the way that colleges change in response to under-funded policy mandates. It is designed to probe for excitement, fears, worries, frame of mind, and then follow up with practical impact. It is also designed to probe for initial action, reaction, and research (if any).</p>
<p>RQ2: What interventions have colleges selected to address the needs of Oregon Promise students? Why?</p>	<p>How did you decide upon these interventions? (describe process)</p> <p>What formal meetings were held, and how often? What did those look like?</p> <p>Was the decision about interventions unanimous? If not, how did you resolve issues?</p>	<p>This question gets at the way colleges make decisions, or the processes involved. These questions are designed to probe for process, justification of decisions, and logistical considerations.</p>

	<p>Describe the process by which this decision was reached (probe for key obstacles, challenges and turning points, best practices).</p> <p>Did institutional culture impact the decision-making process? If so, how?</p> <p>What was your role in the process?</p> <p>How did you convey the decision to others?</p> <p>How was the decision implemented? How was it received on campus? (speed)</p> <p>Did decision makers cite data when they conveyed the decision to others at the college? If so, which data were cited?</p>	
<p>RQ3: How have colleges brought to bear institution decision-making in selecting the interventions developed to address stipulations of the Oregon Promise?</p>	<p>How did you prioritize interventions? (External and internal forces)</p> <p>Is this new work or building upon something you already were doing?</p> <p>What was the motivation, or purpose of behind, selecting these strategies?</p> <p>What did you ultimately want to achieve through this decision? Why?</p> <p>Did you consider the reaction of the state, students, employees, or public?</p>	<p>The literature review, in conjunction with systems theory and Tierney’s cultural decision-making theory, suggests that when external pressures are applied against internal culture and influences, that homeostasis is likely to occur. Research also suggests that decision-making teams do not make use of data or decision-making systems. These questions will get to the heart of these questions by probing for motivation.</p>

	<p>If you have had a decision-making role at another institution how did that decision- making process compare to this one?</p> <p>Is there anything else you think I should know about how the Oregon Promise has impacted you?</p>	<p>Designed to wrap up and get at anything not covered in the above questions.</p>
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Reflexivity and Subjectivity

Reflexivity is the lens through which to analyze and answer methodological concerns. There are multiple means of reflexivity and they include personal reflexivity, epistemological reflexivity, introspection, intersubjective, mutual collaboration, social critique, discursive deconstruction, endogenous and referential reflexivity. In this research, I addressed personal reflexivity by remaining aware that as a researcher I influenced and shape the research, just as it influenced and shapes me. I used a field journal to record my thoughts and reflections to analyze and be both transparent and honest about them. This research was conducted through the social constructionist lens. This lens incorporates introspection, mutual collaboration and social critique all of which were engaged in this process. Reflexivity maintains that reality is negotiated between the participants and the researcher, that both are co-inquirers of knowledge. At the same time, I was in a position of power by asking about processes that may be unfamiliar in that they are not typically discussed (they are lived). Examining constructs and defining them can cause feelings of uncertainty, judgement and a concern for how this could be viewed. I was also in a position of decision-making power. I carried a legitimacy, but also was talking with people who outranked and quite possibly disagreed with my own

perspectives. My interviewees were also in positions to impact state policy. All of this was carefully navigated, addressed and prepared for. In conducting this research, I committed myself to ongoing self-awareness and mindfulness. Through thoughtful authentic disclosure I addressed reflexivity and power imbalances. I also triangulated data for maximum authenticity.

I presented myself as a confident researcher when I conducted the interviews on interviewee campuses, but I also acknowledged that I was in a position of decision-making and a participant in this reality. This dual role was helpful for building rapport and presenting passionate detachment. I stated that my purpose was that of open minded inquiry and that the purpose of the research was to help all community college decision makers in their quest to support student success. Procedurally, I asked if participants were comfortable talking to me during and prior to the interviews and I provided an avenue for written follow-up. I stressed that the findings of this study would be used to formulate an overall look at the issue, not singular judgment. I explained my intention was to validate findings and ground them. I also journaled my own thoughts and responses throughout this journey as these impacted the findings or more specifically, my interpretation of the findings. Addressing positionality, subjectivity and reflexivity also required embedding best research practices, developing theoretical grounding, defining solid constructs and assuring methodological congruence. I also practiced awareness as a first step in addressing many of these methodological challenges.

Data Analysis

Inductive data analysis is a crucial part of the qualitative research process, because it takes the raw data and transforms it into something meaningful and useful (Patton, 2002). Theoretical analysis is helpful as well, because it provides a deductive perspective (Savin-Baden, 2000). Once data was collected, I transcribed it into verbatim transcripts. Once completed, the transcripts were double checked against the audio recordings and triangulated against the journaled field notes, institutional websites, participant vitas, written questionnaires and the literature as appropriate. All data was then gathered into three copies, two of which consisted of encrypted and password protected files stored on flash drives. The first digital flash drive was stored in my fire proof, combination locked, safe. The second copy was maintained as a hard copy binder and used for reference and data manipulation. When not in use, it too was stored in the safe. The third copy was maintained on a flash drive and was cut and pasted as needed for data organization and theme development without compromising the original data (Patton, 2002). This password encrypted drive was also stored in the safe when not in use.

The next step of the data analysis was to read and reread the data to obtain maximum familiarity (Savin-Baden, 2000). Early readings gave both a sense of the whole and a sense of each case (Stake, 2006). Journaling was used at this point as well. As the data was read and points stood out or were repeated, I jotted them in my journal. This process was repeated for over one year, with several months of time elapsing between the previous reading to ensure internal consistency was obtained over multiple readings. Additionally, occasional thoughts would bubble up about the theoretical and conceptual

framework (as I observed connections to them in the data). As this happened, I added a section to my journal for sketching out these ideas. Ultimately my journal held numerous entries including (a) initial comments via data form (Appendix E), (b) notes under the name of each interviewee (from transcribing, listening and reading), (c) sections on similarities and differences between cases, (d) theoretical/conceptual sketches, and (e) a section on observations that needed additional triangulation such as those that were debatable, critical or controversial and initial page numbers of comments to be used in developing the narrative (Stake, 2006). After reading the data until familiarity and internal consistency in organization was obtained, I organized it into a sensible and logical format as suggested by Stake (2006). First I broke down each interview into ideas and quotes. Next I grouped responses by research questions and then within research questions by similar and different answers.

Coding and Theme Exploration

Initial informal coding occurred as I transcribed. For example, many participants talked about their reaction to Oregon Promise as skepticism, excitement or resentment. I grouped these quotations together under “personal reactions to Oregon Promise”. Some comments seemed particularly insightful. Many interviewees mentioned wanting to do right by students, but followed this with a comment about being uncertain how to do that. As I heard these comments I journaled the participant comment. I was also attentive to and journaled issues of “foreshadowing” such as comments about barrier thinking including silos, resource competition and budget limits (Stake, 2006). My goal here was to focus on each case individually prior to engaging with the whole as a quintain to

address the case quintain dilemma (Stake, 2006). The quintain is the whole study consisting of individual case evaluations pulled together into meaningful results (Stake, 2006). I started with results by interviewee (individual case evaluations) and then compiled them by initial themes (whole study) results. In considering these very initial themes, I once again went back to the theoretical and conceptual literature looking for themes suggested by the literature. Because there was little existing research a priori analysis was not completed, though I did gather key terms for consideration from the literature review and theoretical foundations. Examples of these terms included governance, decision making, external pressure and culture. As a fledgling researcher, my early themes consisted of multiple constructs and ideas. After each interview was coded, I had a list of 32 codes (access, affordability, assessment, barriers to change, change, communication, culture, data-based decision making, equity, excited, external pressure, faculty, funding, goal setting, governance, government, interventions, knowledge, motivation, multiple initiatives, nervous, opportunity, Oregon Promise specific lessons, resentment, retention, risk, silo, skepticism, students and value). These were further refined by looking at quality of the comments, number of comments, number of comments common to all participants and priority per case (see Table 5 and Table 6). Lastly, I narrowed these by asking questions about relevance, importance, meaning. My purpose was to attend to the constructionist framework, and as such, I frequently asked, “What does this say about meaning? What does this say about reality? How important is this to the case and/or quintain?”

Table 5. Demonstrative Samples of Tag Revisions During Coding

Process	Original Tag(s)	Final Theme
competition for resources, silo thinking, working independently, power differential, different work structures, bitterness	Silo, Conflict, System Barriers	Systemic Barriers
funding, people, time, workloads, system improvements or rigidity, uncertainty in resource awards	Resources, funding, barriers	Systemic Barriers
student first decision making, student focused culture, desire to do right by students	Students, decision making, values, learning	Access, Equity and Educational Value
Who is coming in the doors, who Oregon Promise benefits, middle class	Access, Equity	Access, Equity and Educational Value
change, cultural change, spark, instigation	Governance	Culture of Decision-Making

Table 6. Chart Used for Narrowing Down Themes

Theme	4 Schools	3 Schools	2 Schools	1 Schools
(substantive theme listed in this column)	(listing of groups that saw this as substantive placed here if all 4)			
(substantive theme listed in this column)		(listing of groups that saw this as substantive placed here if 3)		
(substantive theme listed in this column)			(listing of groups that saw this as substantive placed here 2)	

(substantive theme listed in this column)				(listing of groups that saw this as substantive placed here if 1)
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Next, data was printed, cut into two inch strips, and “played with”. It was organized into themes by case and the across cases, with results tracked on Excel spreadsheets as they were modified so that a historical record was maintained throughout the process. Once information was coded by interviewee (Appendix H), I emailed the raw data transcripts to each interviewee for verification and member checking (Stake, 2006). Although this does not eliminate bias, it does serve to ensure that the participant voice was interpreted correctly and gave participants an opportunity to clarify, correct and hear their voice. Unfortunately, one of my participants retired unexpectedly just prior to this step (KG, School 4), so member checking and additional follow-up was not conducted in this case. In this situation, I utilized triangulation with other interviews prior to drawing conclusions from that interview alone.

Naturalistic generalizations were also made by grouping data into word and frequency tables (see Figure 3) by case and by the whole as suggested by Yin (2009). Journaling and playing with frequency graphs helped to give a visual understanding of what all the data suggested and what it might mean. Throughout the process what assertions and implications could be drawn from the data were also recorded (Appendix I). Throughout the entire process, I attempted to consider the individual cases and the

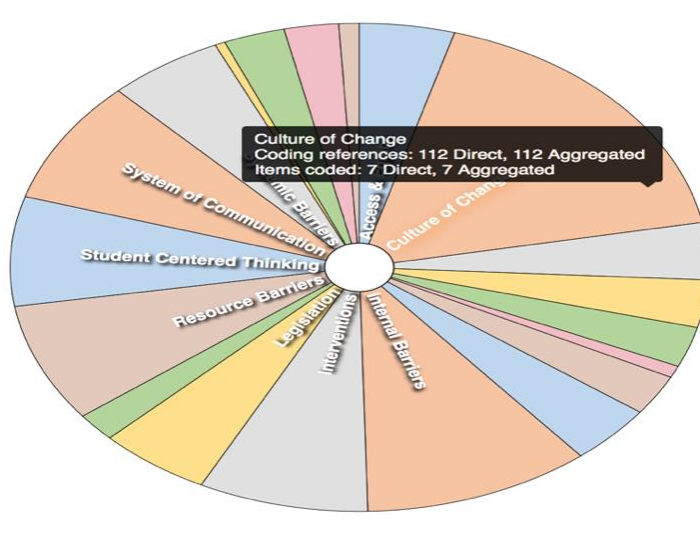
quintain in a dialectical loop to understand what it all meant, implied and suggested (Stake, 2006).

Comments were first prioritized by number of coded responses. Both number of coded responses per individual and school were examined (see Table 7). Participants who made sixteen or more comments that were coded for a given theme, were given a priority of high. Participants who made between ten to fifteen coded comments received a medium priority rating. And participants who made less than ten coded comments received a low priority rating. Additionally, each of the individual participants' scores were added together and prioritized to create a priority among the remaining themes (see Table 7). I then looked at the individual comments and determined the quality and importance of the responses within the overall interview. This too was checked with participants and triangulated with theory to ascertain agreement on the importance of the comments.

Table 7. Example Compilation of Themes by Number and Priority per Case and Quintain

Themes	School 1	Participant 1	Participant 2
Theme 1	16 coded responses = High	10 coded responses = High	6 coded responses = Low
Theme 2	5 coded responses = Low	5 coded responses = Medium	1 coded responses = Medium

Figure 3. Graphic Organizer by Concept by Case



Once the information had been organized and “played with” and member checked, and agreement was obtained, coding consisted of both embedded and thematic aspects (Creswell, 2007). Written documents, again checking back with members where needed (Appendix E), were used for thematic aspects and triangulation (Stake, 2006). Detailed examinations of each case were first examined individually (within-case analysis). When looking at individual case themes I asked myself several questions; How does this match with what I have read? How does this differ from what I have read? How prominent is this finding? How could this finding be used? For this step, I utilized a worksheet for each interviewee (Appendix H). After the within case analysis, themes were combined onto one worksheet per school and then one worksheet for the entire quintain looking for commonalities and findings (Stake, 2006).

Finally, meaning was derived from the data compilation (see Table 8 and Table 9). This process is consistent with that suggested by (Stake, 2006). To derive meaning from the coded data, the number of coded responses were listed and then ranked. The

highest number of coded responses equaled the number one priority in terms of ideas the participants felt were important to record. A participant who mentioned an idea once, received a low ranking in terms of that themes importance to them. A ranking was assigned to every coded answer regardless of number. I also completed axial coding and attempted to locate relationships among different themes. Early axial coding included themes of access and equity, culture of change, external pressure, etc. All participant rankings were checked by the participants to confirm accuracy of data which was important for triangulation.

Table 8. Example of Ranking of Themes per Case and Quintain

Themes	School	Rank	Participant	Participant
Theme	25 comments	<i>1- Highest rank</i>	15 Comments highest rank	10 comments second rank
Theme	21 comments	<i>2- Middle rank</i>	5 comments second rank	16 comments highest rank
Theme	4 comments	3- lowest rank	2 comments lowest rank	2 comments lowest rank

Table 9. Example Frequency Tally and Rank by Theme

Themes	Frequency of Coded Responses	Rank Overall
Theme 1	44	5
Theme 2	173	1

Once data was analyzed, it was written up starting with a description of the cases (Patton, 2002). The individual case studies were written with a focus on the major epiphanies, cumulative epiphanies, minor epiphanies and relived epiphanies (Patton,

2002). Following this was a comparison between cases. Focus was placed on how individuals socially construct information within the governance context. The write up included what had been confirmed by data, what misconceptions had been disabused, what important data had been illuminated and how these findings might impact current policy or practice (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2006). Final comments included naturalistic generalizations in answer to the question, “When all is said and done what conclusions can be drawn from all of this work?” (Patton, 2002). The last section (see Table 8) included new ideas generated from this research and what the future of research on free college policy and decision-making for culture change might include (Patton, 2002).

Design Rigor and Construct Validity

Justification for presenting the data as outlined above is threefold a) to meet the academic expectations of the dissertation committee (advancing the scientific knowledge base, contributing to research and using good research methodology), b) to follow field established best practices, and c) to avoid becoming too abstract (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2009) case studies do have construct, internal and external validity. Construct validity is high when attention is paid to operational definitions, multiple sources of evidence, chain of evidence, key informants, conceptual frameworks, theory and operational definitions as they inform constructs (Yin, 2009).

I was also concerned with consequential validity as this was crucial for constructing reality (Messick, 1989). Attending to consequential validity meant asking repeated questions, asking clarifying questions, restating for validation and applying the responses to analogies and examples to ensure that I understood not only what was being

said, but how it operated. Affirmations from participants and expanded examples ensured that this was done correctly. I utilized a peer researcher to listen to a sample of recordings to ensure that I did this with accuracy. Both the study design and attention to detail in implementation helped to assure rigor.

Credibility, Authenticity, Dependability, and Transferability

Creswell (2007) suggests eight strategies for credibility and further suggests that researchers address two or three of these. The goal of this study was to address as many of the eight as possible. Many of these eight are applicable to the constructs of authenticity, dependability and transferability as well. The first strategy is prolonged engagement in the field and persistent observation with the research subjects. For this, I conducted each interview at the interviewees school at the time of their choosing. One interviewee from School 4 preferred to meet off-campus at a coffee shop and this was accommodated. Each interview took between 60-120 minutes and I offered to come again if more time was needed. I took notes during each interview and I also journaled my observations immediately following each interview.

The second strategy is the triangulation of sources, methods and theories (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009). I completed triangulation by establishing consistent results across multiple sources (e.g. interview, document analysis, written questionnaires, theory and conceptual data). For example, one school mentioned that communication was part of their organizational culture. Communication was also mentioned in the literature. After writing up my findings on communication, I had participants read the findings. By triangulating the literature, the interview and

subsequent findings drawn from the interview and the schools mission and value statement I could demonstrate the credibility of this statement. I was careful to triangulate any information that seemed critical, new or unique (Stake, 2006). I also triangulated across institutions and participants. I journaled triangulation when used. The goal was to uncover and present this information in such a way that demonstrated credibility, authenticity and dependability.

The third strategy for credibility and authenticity is to have a peer review that includes a “devil’s advocate” which in this case study was completed by peer feedback, advisor feedback and dissertation committee feedback. Next, Creswell (2007) suggests that a negative case analysis be conducted. This process consisted of examining contrasting cases and revising the hypothesis until all cases fit eliminating outliers and exceptions (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2001, Yin, 2009). It is important to note that this did not mean ignoring or choosing cases that did not fit the hypothesis. In fact, it meant the opposite. Creswell (2007) notes that the contrasting cases are often one of the most interesting parts of the research progress. In addition to interest documenting negative case analysis assists with credibility, dependability and transferability.

The next recommendation is the process of clarifying any bias the researcher may have. This was accomplished through the positionality statement, a researcher journal and documentation of the reflexive and constructed process. Creswell (2007) recommends checking back with participants for clarification and feedback and this was done after the interview and during preliminary analysis (theme discovery). I also offered the participants the opportunity to provide feedback during both the rough and final drafts.

This was an important step for credibility and dependability. Transferability though not the primary purpose of this case study was assured through thick rich description that allows readers to transfer the findings to other cases. Creswell's (2007) final recommendation is that of employing an external audit. This was accomplished via dissertation committee review, feedback and ultimate approval.

A primary criticism of the case study methodology is that it is not generalizable or transferable given the methodological limitations. However, as a researcher I maintain that specific, concrete, co-constructed and practical knowledge is valuable. Case study is an excellent method by which to generate hypothesis, test theory in action and gain valuable information of use in the field (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This study provides valuable insight into institutional decision-making factors in response to the Oregon Promise that have not previously been examined and will inform an area sorely lacking in research. Transferability was increased by utilizing thick, rich, description so that the study could be repeated following case study protocol and engaging in informed manipulation of data during data collection and analysis (Yin, 2009).

Chapter Summary

Throughout this chapter I have laid out the foundation for how this instrumental multiple case study, a qualitative inquiry, was conducted. I explained the participants, instrumentation, data collection and data analysis processes. I further outlined the analytical steps I took to ensure that validity, credibility, transferability and generalizability were possible. I incorporated awareness by addressing my own

positionality, reflexivity and subjectivity. These measures helped to ensure quality and rigorous results.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This qualitative case study was framed by two over-arching interpretive frameworks: social constructionist and critical social theory. The goal was to understand how participants constructed meaning from the Oregon Promise mandate, how they responded to the mandate for intervention and why interventions were selected in response to the mandates created by the Oregon Promise. To create a deeper understanding of how this was operationalized at mid-sized community colleges in Oregon, all four of Oregon's mid-sized colleges were studied. Because this study was aimed at understanding decision making (governance), decision makers responsible for making and implementing the decisions about the Oregon Promise stipulations were interviewed. Utilizing four different community colleges and seven different decision makers within those schools increased construct validity by incorporating multiple voices and perspectives (Yin, 2014). Three broad questions guided the study and collection of data:

RQ 1) How has the Oregon Promise policy impacted mid-sized Oregon community colleges?

RQ 2) What interventions have colleges selected to address the needs of Oregon Promise students? Why?

RQ 3) How have colleges brought to bear institution decision-making in selecting the interventions developed to address stipulations of the Oregon Promise?

Interpretation of Codes to Themes

Stake (2006) suggests that case studies be designed to derive meaning from the cases individually and from the cases as a whole (the quintain). He further suggests that themes start from what is known. I looked at numbers of comments, quality of comments and consistency of comments across both individuals and institutions. I elected to focus on depth of responses that reflected lived reality and did not consider occasional comments. The goal of this study was to understand how four mid-sized community colleges responded to the Oregon State Promise mandate. The four institutions varied in response. The initial data showed that the institutions focused on 30 areas related to decision-making in response to the mandate. These 30 codes included access, affordability, assessment, barriers to change, change, communication, culture, data-based decision making, equity, excitement, external pressure, faculty, funding, goal setting, governance, government, interventions, knowledge, motivation, multiple initiatives, nervousness, opportunity, Oregon Promise specific lessons, resentment, retention, risk, silo thinking, skepticism, students and value (Appendix J). These themes were further refined by looking at quality of the comments, number of comments, number of comments common to all participants and priority per case (Appendix L).

In further examining the initial codes and the frequency of responses, seven broad themes emerged from the institutions' data. The seven themes derived from the data analysis and initial codes included Access and Equity, Culture of Change, Educational

Value, External Pressures, Legislation, System of Communication, and Systemic Barriers (Appendix K). The iterative analysis process further narrowed the themes down to four substantive themes common to all cases. These four major themes included (a) Access, Equity and Educational Value, (b) Culture of Decision-Making, (c) System of Communication and (d) Systemic Barriers (see Table 10). After a year of re-organizing, repeating the process, playing with the data, verifying information with participants, triangulation with other data points, checking with the literature, writing and re-writing the analysis and coming up with the same consistent themes, I decided these were the final themes that most closely represented what institutions brought to bear in decision-making regarding the Oregon Promise under-funded mandates.

A sense of the whole case study is first presented by looking at the broad themes and overarching thematic findings. This is first approached from a high-level overview with results aggregated across the entire study. Then, the case study is broken down into an analysis of each individual school and the data from each case is presented individually. The purpose of this is to look at the problem of practice at the meta level. This information could be used as a white paper for colleges seeking solutions to real world problems. In each vignette participant voices are used to illustrate the individual nature of each case study. Following the individual case presentation, the quintain is looked at in its entirety pulling in both broad and specific results to address the research questions and overall findings (Figure 3).

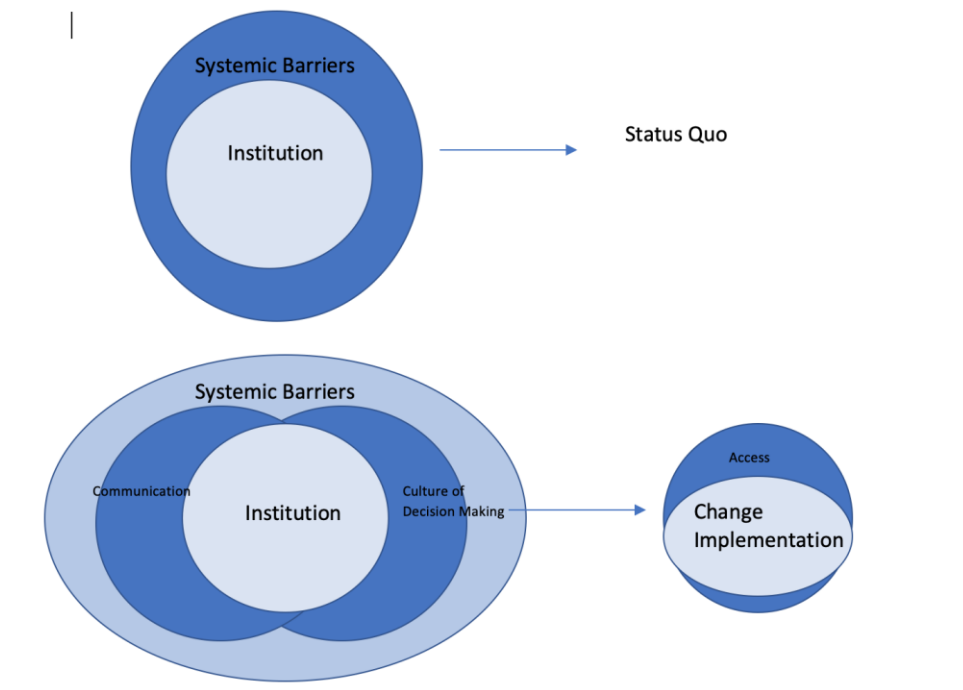
Table 10. Refined Themes

Theme	Conceptualization	Application (Findings)
Systemic Barriers (sub categories include Internal Barriers, Multiple Initiatives and Resource Barriers)	budgets, legislation, stand-alone systems, high resource systems, competition for resources, silo thinking, working independently, power differential, secondary schools, transfer universities	<p>A key finding from this theme was that where positive pressures did not exist, change became burdensome and overwhelming causing initiatives to stand-still maintaining status quo.</p> <p>A second key finding in this area was that the institutions that made change did so <i>despite</i> external pressures not in response to.</p>
Culture of Decision-Making (sub-categories include Data Based Decision Making, Decision Making, Formal Governance and Student Centered Thinking)	change, cultural change, spark, instigation	<p>A key finding of this theme was that decision making and the resulting change is most effective when shared and relationship based.</p> <p>A second key finding was that the institutions that did implement change reported that this was a result of their collegial shared-governance student success initiatives that were already underway prior to the Oregon Promise mandate.</p>
Access, Equity & Educational Value	Population that benefits from the Oregon Promise, and that utilized benefits, value of education for those students, access, equitable	A key finding from this theme was that administrators recognized that access was not indicative of system change, equity or educational value.
System of Communication	how, why, when to communicate, best practices, communication tools, communication is governance and culture	<p>A key finding from this theme was that systemic communication served as the tool to facilitate decision-making.</p> <p>A second key finding was that in schools that implemented positive change a clear communication plan or</p>

		<p>tool was used systematically to reach all stakeholders.</p> <p>A third key-finding was that the willingness to make mistakes was a key to successful change implementation.</p>
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Before discussing the themes individually, it is worth mentioning that there was interplay and interaction between the four themes (Figure 4). Where an institution was surrounded or overwhelmed by systemic barriers the status quo was maintained. Alternatively, communication and a culture of decision making that was positive could buffer system barriers. In that case, decision-making was more likely to occur in ways that supported student success, access, or educational value. These findings are consistent with Neo-Institutional and Tierney’s Decision-Making theory.

Figure 4. Theme Interaction



Systemic Barriers

The most frequent theme across all four schools was that of Systemic Barriers. This theme started with several sub-themes including internal barriers, multiple initiatives and resource barriers. Further refinement added legislative barriers and external pressures. The most common phrases under this theme included: stand-alone systems, high resource systems, competition for resources, silo thinking, working independently to get the job done, workloads, trying to do too much with too little, uncertain resources, legislative mandates, external pressure and system rigidity. Alone these were not significant, but together they painted a picture of institutions that were working hard with little resources, relatively flat infrastructures and many barriers. One institution had a successful retention program going and had this money cut and re-directed to Oregon Promise students. This left them feeling that the Oregon Promise hurt other students. More than one school mentioned the plethora of other initiatives going on simultaneously including Achieving the Dream, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities accreditation visits, Guided Pathways, Career Pathways, career technical advisory board recommendations, industry input, advising changes, developmental education re-design and other systemic changes (e.g. Education Management System changes, Learning Management System changes).

Administrators consistently felt that asking an already burdened human resource system to take on one more major shift without additional resources would break the backs of employees and faculty resulting in programs implemented without consistency, rigor or data informed continual improvement. Administrators noted that implementing

systems in this manner ultimately hurts stakeholders (e.g. students, staff, faculty). It was universally recognized that to make systemic change enormous amounts of positive pressure is required. Examples of positive pressures included shared governance, collegial climate, adequate funding, the will of multiple stake-holders and a collective vision. A key finding from this theme was that where positive pressures did not exist, change became burdensome and overwhelming causing initiatives to stand-still maintaining the status quo.

There was a clear sense across institutions that external pressures could have a negative impact. Under the sub-theme of External Pressures administrators mentioned partners, business expectations, secondary institutions, industry challenges, four-year transfer institutions and legislative expectations. These community colleges were trying to please multiple parties often with competing interests. For example: secondary schools were frustrated that the community colleges had not communicated about Oregon Promise, four-year transfer institutions felt community colleges were being preferentially selected for benefits and industry thought Oregon Promise was a clear answer to getting more employees into their pipelines. Comments around legislation referenced the state decision making being top-down and bureaucratic in its approach. There was consensus that the state expected innovation but had a genuine lack of knowledge and expertise in how this innovation should be approached or completed. These competing messages left community college administrators feeling as if there was no clear answer which stifled innovation and change. A second key finding in this area was that the institutions that made change did so *despite* external pressures, not in response to. For example, none of

the schools were given information about the Oregon Promise in a timely manner that would have enabled them to share the information with stakeholders (e.g. secondary schools). One school shared information anyway communicating what they knew and what they expected to hear. This potential risk paid off and made a positive situation out of a potentially negative one.

Culture of Decision Making

Culture of Decision Making was the second most frequent theme common to all institutions. This theme was initially broken down into sub-themes consisting of data based decision making, decision making, formal governance and student centered decision making. Ultimately these were combined into one theme that represented the decision-making culture that led or did not lead to change. Combined these responses demonstrated the components of decision making and how different models were used depending upon the time, location, cultural norms and in relationship to other college work. A key finding of this theme was that decision making and the resulting change was most effective when shared and relationship based. Most frequent words and terms used under this theme were: data based thinking, best practices for decision making, setting up a culture of change, did not provide the needed spark, student focused decision making, students first and desire to do right by students.

The study demonstrated that community colleges utilized a wide variety of decision making models including collegial shared governance, pragmatic shared governance, the bureaucratic model of decision making and authoritarian decision making. Decisions surrounding the Oregon Promise interventions were operational and

thus less likely to raise to the level of decision making by executive team or the college President. At the same time, change did not occur unless multiple stakeholders were engaged in constructing solutions to student success. Some participants reported hallmarks of the cybernetic model and found that because there was not funding attached to stimulate creativity and engage in new adaptive solutions, the status quo was maintained. These decision makers looked at what could be implemented, meeting the letter of the law without substantive change. A key finding was that the institutions that did implement change reported that this was a result of their collegial shared-governance initiatives that were already underway prior to the Oregon Promise mandate.

Access, Equity and Educational Value

The Oregon Promise student success mandate was frustrating to administrators in terms of access, equity and educational value. All administrators recognized that access did not equal equity and that open access required additional supports to ensure equity and student retention through completion. The Oregon Promise did not increase access of vulnerable students as these students were already Pell Grant and Oregon Hope Opportunity Grant qualified. The Oregon Promise proved most beneficial to middle income families and students who may not have been as vulnerable as other populations of students. The legislation then mandated student supports to these students. Some administrators were adamant that this perpetuated inequality. The state did soften in subsequent versions telling schools that initiatives needed to be implemented but were not required to address all Oregon Promise students and that the implementations were not even required to be limited to Oregon Promise students. By not addressing students in

need of intervention in any meaningful way the legislation/state did not attend to equity. Evidence suggests that the framework around the Oregon Promise mandate was never structured in a way that even intended to do so. A key finding from this theme was that administrators recognized that access was not indicative of system change, equity or educational value.

All administrators mentioned the importance of community college and its role in improving the state, community and lives of students. The value of the college experience was well understood by these administrators. Though no administrator discussed the “cooling out” effect previously mentioned in the literature review they recognized the barriers that kept students from retaining and completing. Not unlike Title III, Title VI, or the GI Bill, administrators understood the intent of the Oregon Promise to be one of increased access. The Oregon Promise mandate provided no answers or solutions for *how* to provide effective interventions that ensured student success for all students including those funded by the Oregon Promise. Further, it did not fund change interventions. As a result, student success initiatives were not created. In some instances, interventions were replicated, scaled up, or overhauled but this was not necessarily Oregon Promise specific.

System of Communication

The last theme was System of Communication. There was no requirement or expectation that communication occur because of the Oregon Promise mandate. This theme was included because all schools mentioned communication as either a barrier or a valuable tool to facilitate change and implement decision-making. A key finding from this theme was that while decision making may have been motivated or accomplished via

a socially constructed environment influenced by multiple voices, communication served as the tool to facilitate this smoothly or not. Where changes were implemented communication was uniformly mentioned as key. Where change did not occur, communication was uniformly mentioned as a barrier to implementing decision making and change. Administrators also unanimously discussed the difficulty of communication and the extreme efforts undertaken to manage communication effectively across organizations consisting of more than 500 employees who were engaged in very different scopes of work and different roles within the overall mission of the college. A key finding was that in schools that implemented positive change a clear communication plan or tool was used systematically to reach all stakeholders.

Results by Individual Case

In the next section I deconstructed the data from each institution and present the findings for each school individually. Results of data analysis are reported for each school noting similarities and differences by individuals within each case. In the final section I reconstruct the quintain informed by the findings of each individual school. I conclude with a final summary placing the findings in the context of the research questions.

School 1 Vignette

I arrived at School 1 which was nestled in the foothills of beautiful Central Oregon. I first met with AM the Dean of Student Services who appeared confident, knowledgeable and had a lengthy 20-year history of service to this school. Unlike many

of my interviewees, AM was excited about the Oregon Promise and the potential it had to excite students who may not otherwise consider college. AM had already been designing student success interventions including hiring a Director of Retention, developing an orientation that would connect students with school resources, mandating advising and developing a student success course prior to the Oregon Promise mandate. I also met with BJ the Vice President of Instruction, who though less complimentary of the Oregon Promise mandate, was extremely complimentary about AM and the team that had been working on these student success interventions prior to the Oregon Promise mandate roll-out.

I learned that the school had been laying the groundwork for student success initiatives for over a year prior to the Oregon Promise with the intention of applying for a multi-million dollar TAACT (Title III) grant. Initially dissatisfied employees who were tired of multiple new and constantly emerging initiatives that they related to “chasing shiny balls” decided to refine campus priorities focusing on their core value of student success. Through campus wide discussions and eventually democratic voting the campus decided to focus on the specific interventions of orientation, mandatory advising and a student success seminar course. They presented the plan to as many groups as possible for feedback and improvement. The grant fell through but then the Oregon Promise happened and the small set of funds were used to pilot the selected interventions with targeted groups of vulnerable students. Initially, proactive counseling (calling and reaching out to students at certain milestones) was included but data suggested that it did not make a difference in student retention. At the end of the Oregon Promise one time

funding, the school was unexpectedly awarded the TAACT grant and is now in the process of scaling up the interventions campus-wide.

Initially, School 1 was excited about the Oregon Promise and the possibility of bringing more students to campus. The interview focused on the collaborative culture present at School 1 and the shared governance in terms of decision making. In comparison to other schools, School 1 talked less about external and legislative barriers though they did still discuss internal barriers such as human resource capacity and funding. They talked more about the role of communication, culture and relationships in decision making than other schools. The two administrators were homogeneous in their attitudes and outlook though there were a few notable differences in responses and priorities (Appendix L). For example, in response to the prompt of what gets in the way of change AM stated, “Having enough people and enough budget that’s what really stops change.” In contrast, BJ said, “Inertia stops change, it’s the idea that we’ve always done it this way that stops it.” Overcoming barriers and increasing access, equity and educational value were the key points reiterated and emphasized by AM. BJ alternatively focused on the positive culture of School 1 being key to overcoming barriers. School 1 was remarkably unique in terms of its culture, collegial relationships and genuine shared governance. As a result, they saw Oregon Promise as an opportunity. School 1 attracted more students and demonstrated success with their interventions further reinforcing the belief that their system is working.

Culture of Decision Making. There were three subthemes about the institution’s culture that influenced its decision making in response the Oregon Promise. These sub-

themes included collegial relationships, shared governance, and a strong focus on student success. Together these cultural norms influenced how the institution responded to the mandate. Both administrators discussed relationships at the institution. BJ stated, “We have very strong working relationships here.” AM stated,

As a group we decided that we needed to quit doing the shiny object thing, we needed to land, and it was a full campus conversation, everybody had an opportunity to participate. Because of that we had so much groundwork done and had so much momentum around a FYE (First Year Experience) concept. When Oregon Promise came about I don’t think anybody batted an eye other than trying to figure out how it would all come together and how it would all work.

School 1 made it clear that change was not something normally well embraced. It was the foundation of shared governance that allowed for this change. AM stated,

We do not normally embrace big monumental change or fundamental changes to systems and structures, well. We did the groundwork, asked big questions, had the resources such as stable leadership and highly involved faculty, we value collaboration and people just believed we could do it here. We had already spent a full year thinking about it, and analyzing it, and defining it, so the only question was which of these grandiose ideas we have can we actually implement?

BJ noted, “We are also a very forgiving institution in that we can pilot things and try things and are okay saying that didn’t work, let’s change directions.”

Both administrators also mentioned that people were dissatisfied with the current operations and desired to be part of the change. BJ said, “They (staff and faculty) knew they weren’t doing it as well as they could and these are high achieving people... they don’t like not being great.” Both administrators also mentioned a strong commitment to student success and the need to do right by students. They used this common vision as a platform for cultural change. AM summarized, “Remaining student centric in all that we do allows us to take risk and work together.” BJ echoed these thoughts by stating, “I’ve

never been in a conversation where students weren't at the center of what we do."

While both administrators mentioned a culture of committees, work groups, student focus and shared governance, they disagreed on the role of the President. One mentioned that the President was hands off and more of a cheerleader, but the other mentioned that the President was, "very hands on. Absolutely. Completely. Could tell you every number, every statistic, every person on campus who was dissatisfied and what their role is in Oregon Promise." The individual responses to the President may well illustrate the President's ability to provide different levels of support depending upon longevity and relationship. The administrator who called the President a cheerleader had been there 20 years. The administrator who mentioned the President was very hands on was newly employed within the previous six months. Still this is an important distinction as Birnbaum (1988) noted that President's should recognize the need for multiple kinds of leadership including relational, transformational and transactional.

Over time there has been institutional learning about the decision-making process at School 1. Some participants talked about the (previous) authoritative decision making process and how this did not serve the institution. This authoritative decision making resulted in resentful and unhealthy relationships. On the other hand, the authoritative decision-making did make the change process easier and faster. Both participants favored the current collegial decision making process. BJ said,

We're an institution that can make a top-down decision if need be... but we don't necessarily like that. We tend to take longer at getting things done because we like to talk about things, we like to make sure it's very collaborative. People have come here and have made unilateral decisions without discussion... and they don't last because they burn bridges. So, we're highly collaborative as an institution.

They even talked specifically about the President bringing a solution that was ultimately rejected and not institutionalized, “our President brought a colleague to talk about Guided Pathways and there were about 40 of us in the room... we said no, we can’t do it... this was heard loud and strong. We did not do it.” Multiple comments were made about teams, workgroups, councils and policy groups who ultimately made decisions that were voted on (by all) to achieve consensus. AM summarized, “We had a voting process to select initiatives and prioritize them.” Likewise, BJ stated, “Ultimately it was the college that decided what we would do.”

System Barriers. There were several barriers identified that influenced the intuition’s response the Oregon Promise. The barriers included financial, structural and relational concerns. Both administrators discussed finances by stating, “Having enough people to do everything that’s possible...it’s driven by budget and fiscal resources.” And, “We’re going through bad budget times.” The structural barriers described workload and policy issues. There were mixed findings about how relationships influenced the process. All participants agreed that the institution had positive working relationships and respected one another. However, the participants disagreed about the role of leadership in that process. One administrator said,

We have ideas, but Student Service people want to know... how will we get that in our system? We have such full plates, silos make it easier to crank through some of that stuff. I think some of the silos we've had in recent years have more been because of vacancies and challenges in leadership within Instruction, and then recently, trying to fill our President's position. Everybody just had their head down to get stuff done, and that was coming off an enrollment boom where in four years we doubled in size. So, that also forced some of that silo stuff to happen, because you just had to get stuff done. But, even take that aside, we just ... we have very positive working relationships. We disagree. I tend to think they are too rigid and too

controlling and they tend to think I'm too loose and not structured enough... we want to implement and they want to wait until everything is perfect... but we genuinely like each other. We can still sit down and talk to each other and that is key.

The ability to communicate well meant that the school could come together around external pressure.

System of Communication. Both administrators stressed the importance of communication across campus and how it is necessary to maintain the high functioning of the institution. They both stressed that good communication requires both a commitment to honest communication and effective tools. Honest communication meant saying no even in response to traditional authority (e.g. the President). This was evidenced by their response to the President about other initiatives, through their willingness to take a risk around the Oregon Promise and even through their experience with external marketing the image of the college.

The ability to recognize when external pressure has built up, say no and have that respected has created a foundation for collegial interaction and shared governance that makes decision making though lengthier, productive. It has also contributed to a cycle of positivity reflected in their marketing and communicated vision of their college. AM said,

This part of Oregon is known as a destination, recreation, tourism spot, and we use that to our advantage and have for a long time. We actively recruit for the sheer sake of coming here. Where others might recruit for athletics, or for international students, or for highly specialized programs, we recruit from get away from home, come to college, come to this beautiful location, stay in our residence halls, which is very- very different in recruiting on a large college scale, instead of for specific niches like athletics.”

Both administrators stressed the importance of a communication system across campus and how it is necessary to maintain high functioning. AM said,

We have two primary folders. One is a folder where only executive team members can post. The other is more open... as long as you read those two things regularly it's really easy to stay abreast of the many things happening on campus.

They also mentioned "regular internal working teams" that met on a regular basis.

Most teams were cross divisional and consisted of both Instruction Leadership and Student Services Leadership who meet once a month on any shared topics of interest covering a self-generated agenda. AM said,

We also do regular campus road shows... we spoke with as many as 20 different departments and groups on campus including the custodians at 5:00 in the morning, public safety at 10:00 at night and any departments that would have us to get feedback on the student success plan. We also did a couple of all college meetings which is how we tend to get information out on big initiatives like this. We did something like 24 campus presentations to make sure everybody had an opportunity to communicate.

This School was also unique in communicating even if they were not certain of the message. AM said,

The legislature communicated everything at the last minute... we took a stance, some would say a risk. We used a lot of soft language, a lot of maybes and we do not know for sure. But we still promoted it and gave enough information that people could make decisions around it.

Both administrators commented on the open communication and willingness to make mistakes as being a key to successful institutional operations.

Access, Equity and Educational Value. School 1 saw Oregon Promise as a venue to increase access. And once they brought students in they could rely on currently developed systems to facilitate equity and educational value. AM asked, "If we get more students to come to college and have a more affordable education, isn't that ultimately the goal?" While School 1 typically enrolls about 5% of students across Oregon, almost

9% of Oregon Promise students elected to enroll there. From their perspective, this is because students see the value proposition that School 1 offers. AM said,

We used Oregon Promise as a way to increase our marketing recruitment reach throughout Oregon. Come here, live on campus, have that full college experience, through advising and orientation and all of these other things. And then having a financial assistance source on top of that made a really nice package that works for students.

School 1 mentioned organizational culture and existing opportunities for relationship building as key to meeting students' needs once enrolled. While some of these interventions were newly developed, some were long standing traditions. BJ said,

We have a culture where faculty are highly involved in student's lives, in volunteering for stuff on campus, volunteering for stuff in the community, that's also required as part of their promotion and tenure process. It's just an inherent part of our culture. You know, we have faculty who come here who are brand new or they've worked at another institution where they haven't had to advise and they push back. They either quickly see the light so to speak, because their colleagues help them with that or they don't last. It's just such a highly-valued piece of what our faculty do.

Other administrators reflected this by stating, "Student success for all students. Access and equity for all students. Relationship building. It's just what we do." These same words are reflected in their written and published values of Learning, Diversity, Innovation, Collaboration and Partnership, Integrity, Accessibility and Sustainability.

School 2 Vignette

School 2 was unique in that there is just one primary administrator responsible for both Student Services and Instructional Affairs. This had both advantages and disadvantages. One disadvantage is that with that degree of responsibility it is virtually impossible to know every detail about everything happening on campus. At the same time this was an advantage as it served to spread the locus of control over more

participants. Demonstrative of this was the fact that DP, the Vice President, frequently called on other administrators to provide information and answer questions while he highlighted the overarching responses for School 2.

DP initially had mixed feelings about the Oregon Promise. He was excited that something was being done to fund college for some students. However, he had been hoping for more. Oregon Promise did not seem to benefit the students who needed the most assistance and it did not fund a k-14 public school system. It also did not bring in increased resources. School 2 did see a slight increase in students from the Oregon Promise. This school was committed to data based decision making and has been very carefully tracking Oregon Promise students. In general, the Oregon Promise students did look like their typical students though they were younger and more likely to be female. In comparing all incoming students, the Oregon Promise students had a higher persistence from fall to winter (92% compared to 69%). They were also more likely to persist from fall to spring (83% compared to 69%). They earned more credits, were more likely to attend full time and had higher Grade Point Averages (GPA). They essentially outperformed the comparison group on every measure. This may be attributable to the fact that they had more intentional outreach, but other special populations received this same attention. It is more likely evidence that Oregon Promise students were not typically vulnerable students.

School 2 had clearly developed avenues of communication that facilitated shared governance. Shared governance at School 2 looked more traditional and bureaucratic than at School 1. Still, there was a sense of shared governance that was reflected in the data.

There was a sense that the Oregon Promise did something. DP said, “Because of it (Oregon Promise), we have developed some things that I think we’ll be able to push upon all of our students, based on some of the things we’ve required with these students, and the successes.” In response to the Oregon legislative requirement School 2 implemented the following interventions: academic and career coaching, physical space for students to congregate and get questions answered, an online orientation that replicated the face to face orientation for online students and a college success course that though already in use for many students was organized specifically for Oregon Promise students. While these were all interventions they already had in place for other groups of students (e.g. Veterans, athletes) with the one-time funding they funded a person to replicate these same structures for the Oregon Promise students. It is worthwhile to mention that School 2 is currently in the process of scaling up these interventions to address these needs for all students via their work on Guided Pathways.

System Barriers. Though the culture of School 2 is open to change there are still systemic barriers, primarily viewed in terms of student barriers and institutional barriers to meeting student needs. School 2 was the only school to approach barriers from the student perspective first. DP said,

If students need money for transportation, childcare, books and other things, the Oregon Promise doesn’t do that. The first year we had two people that were supporting the Oregon Promise students... after a year it is less due to less financial resources and this impacts students.

The institutional barriers discussed included the history of academia itself. DM stated,

We've had a very similar model of teaching academics for 500-600 years. It's obviously changed some, but up until 20 years ago there was an expectation of what an instructor did- and it was in the classroom. It's hard to change those things...to change the way we think about great student services and extra-curricular activities... it's hard to do.

This indicates that long held traditional roles for faculty and negotiating this political area may very well be a barrier to change implementation at the community college level. School 1 also mentioned the roles of faculty, but their faculty seemed to be embracing advising and other duties that may not always be attributed to traditional faculty roles. A related issue was consistency of leadership in key leadership positions. According to DP,

In student services, it's a profession people get into and then see areas of growth that they want to move into. Which is different than faculty, who this is their one position and they want to do it for twenty years. It's also hard to make progress when you don't have continuity of vision in leadership... one of the biggest challenges is continuity of leadership in middle management and executive leadership. There's all of the anxiety that comes with change.

This administrator clearly had experience with the rational structure brought to bear by bureaucracy as exemplified by socially constructed job descriptions, set tasks and clearly defined roles that have been traditionally held. Both factors may be partially explained by the fact that DP came up through the ranks of faculty at a university and the fact that School 2 was currently undergoing a Presidential search to replace a long-time President. Still these issues highlight that traditional roles can create barriers to change implementation.

Culture of Decision Making. School 2 did see changes they attributed to the Oregon Promise including infrastructure and timing in relationship to culture and shared

governance. The structure of the school itself was discussed in terms of making it more amenable to change. DP said,

Our divisions are a hybrid of student services and academic disciplines. They may be faculty members, but they are in the division along with enrollment management, advising, event center, financial aid, basic skills, English and math. We have point people but the divisions are mixed...

They ultimately all report to one Vice President who manages both Instruction and Student Affairs. “We built our infrastructure based upon asking what entering students need. What are their touchpoints?” Employees at the school attribute this to working closer together for change. Another administrator stated, “I didn’t ever struggle making connections with the math and English departments. Right off the bat as a student services director I have access... they are right in my own division.” This seemed to influence the positivity of the culture. DP said,

If you did a climate study of the college, we’d be on the positive side of people being ready for the direction we are going. You know, I think there are still some questions, but we have done some great activities. And just even thinking of our in-service this year, the feedback was great constructive feedback. It was feedback that was wanting more and saying, give us more we’re excited about learning about this. We took it slow, with a commitment to shared governance first.

Because of this strategic thinking, School 2 was onboard with decision making designed to elicit change.

School 2 also discussed timing and preparation. DP said,

We started kind of slow. We said we're going to do it but we didn't jump in forcing people to do anything. We just said we're going to do it, now let's talk about what it is that we're going to do. Then in the second year we, we sort of had to focus on assessment. But we continued to talk about, and we went forward with, a mandatory orientation. And we went forward with student planning and degree audit planning software. And then we decided that we would invest in student collaborative software. Which is really Guided Pathway software... You have to spend a lot of time allaying anxiety. You

cannot just dump a new thing on people. They need to hear about it for a long time. We started talking about the student experience, about Guided Pathways and then we were ready when Oregon Promise came around to scale things up.

One example of a strategy used to help employees understand the student perspective was the Completion Game. All employees played a game about what it is like for a student to get through college. It helped all employees see the barriers, DP recalls, “...it was eye opening for a lot of people. In the last couple of years, we have really hammered our persistence rate. These are our retention rates. There are the people we are failing.”

These difficult dialogues were built on a culture of shared governance. While School 1 had a more relational approach, School 2 still took an approach to major decision making that ensured the voices of all stakeholders were heard in the planning process. DP said,

We have a very strong tradition of shared governance that the faculty are very proud of and the classified staff are very proud of. And you can't be proud if you aren't going to participate. It starts at the top. Our President has empowered us... lack of trust and egos have not gotten in the way. We get people together and really talk... they are then willing to take reasonable risks.

The school has multiple groups and many of these follow clearly defined structures and rulebooks (e.g. bargaining contracts). School 2 takes shared governance seriously, but clear structures for planning and negotiating are in place which suggests the influence of bureaucracy. DP stated,

We look at the decision and the communication matrix and find all of the groups and venues... we get the information out, do forums, and make sure people have input. The major decisions are often made by the President, though through shared governance people are empowered to do their jobs. There's more of a realization that everybody has to have a voice and

everybody has to be involved. That and setting the expectation that shared governance doesn't mean that if one person says no that it doesn't happen.

Access, Equity, and Educational Value. The goal of the Oregon Promise was to provide access to vulnerable students. The administrators at School 2 critiqued the implementation of Oregon Promise based on what students were served by the policy. DP said,

The reality was that as a last-dollar award, it did not help the neediest students. It (Oregon Promise) felt as if it was skewed towards a population of students just out of high school and with a particular grade point average. That didn't really mirror the students who need the most help at community colleges. And there's so many of our students who are past six months out of high school. You know, what about those students? What are we going to do for them?

There was an interest at School 2 in expanding solutions to address this. DP said,

I wish that we could modify it and put more money into it so that it would really serve these (vulnerable) students well. And that we could expand it to students who may not be planning to go to a four-year college at all. It (Oregon Promise) attracted a new population of students here, those who decided to come here or that were originally planning to go to a four-year institution. But if you look at the statistics, only 8% of the Oregon Promise students were not necessarily planning to go to college at all.

DP acknowledged that community college is a great value and opportunity, especially for the increased percentage of the community that needs to be educated. However, he noted that the Oregon Promise did nothing to address this need for the most vulnerable students. When asked to create student success solutions for students who were not most in need of the interventions the school elected to continue doing what it was doing albeit for additional students. Further, they planned to continue scaling these implementations for all students.

System of Communication. This administrator noted the key role of communication in terms of autonomy, organizational structure and developmental opportunities. DP said,

When our President came, there was a recognition that people were not understanding or communicating with each other. Though there was never a snake-pit atmosphere, people were doing their own thing. They had to put systems of communication in place. There's still silos. There are people making decisions without consulting other people, but that's not the cultural norm.

The open communication at School 2 seems to have started at the top and moved down from the President to management to other employees as would be expected in a traditional bureaucratic model. DP stated,

When I first got here I started a discussion group... We started to explore topics and change. We sent faculty to learn new things and share them. We made sure people understood the problems and the why. We spent a lot of time disseminating information and building a communication matrix. Here are all of the stakeholders and here are the venues to reach them. We built our communication plans on that... people have a responsibility to report back to their constituents... and our institution loves forums.

By placing responsibility in a visual matrix, it made clear where the lines of communication were expected to exist. Supporting these with professional development strengthened the effectiveness of the communication. Overall, this has had a positive impact on the communication practice at School 2.

School 3 Vignette

School 3 is in a unique geographic location that places it near a major four-year transfer school. Initially leaders at School 3 were extremely skeptical of Oregon Promise. They had a very successful 5th year high-school program that stopped because of the Oregon Promise. The Oregon Promise funded the exact same students and thus the

enrollment impact was virtually nil. Additionally, no change was attributed to the Oregon Promise.

The Vice Presidents at School 3 communicated different points of view. The Vice President of Student Services discussed the importance of addressing vulnerable students and not just college bound high school students. The Vice President of Instruction focused and prioritized responses based upon institutional culture, communication and the impact of the mandate on the institution. While their responses were not in opposition, they clearly saw the Oregon Promise through different lenses and approached the topic differently. Overall though they were both committed to honest, transparent communication and decision making which contributed to the inclusiveness of the culture and shared ownership of both problems and solutions. They also expressed respect for each other.

In response to the Oregon legislative requirements, School 3 did not implement any changes in student success efforts. The administrators noted that effective mandatory advising and a student success course were already required for every new student and thus they met the requirements of the legislation with no additional change needed. BC the Vice President of Student Services said, “Best practices were advising and a success class. We were already doing that (successfully) here.” In part their work with Guided Pathways had already started the school on the path to positive student success changes. The legislative mandate felt very heavy handed and failed to acknowledge the great deal of work that had already occurred in response to internal initiative. AB the Vice President of Instruction stated,

They're not the experts (legislators). I mean that's what I like about Guided Pathways. Here's the statistics. Here's the problem. Here is some suggested very general ideas. Now go figure out what works in your community and your institution. That would have been amazing if this was how the Oregon Promise could have been tackled. I don't see that system changing which means that we're always going to get funding for people's pet projects. We're never going to look at all of Oregon or we're never going to give educational institutions money with no strings to say, I want to see your completion rate increase by whatever, but I'm not going to tell you how to do it. That would just be amazing.

Throughout my interviews with School 3 it was apparent that trust, autonomy, and respect were important cultural norms to the institution. School 3 is well known throughout the state for its innovativeness, willingness to take risks and willingness to change when something is not working. School 3 was part of a national initiative to scale up Guided Pathways and was knee deep in this work when the Oregon Promise mandate came down from the legislature. When asked both Vice Presidents stressed that system barriers, cultural response to change, access, equity and educational value, along with communication played key roles in how they responded to the under-funded mandates of the Oregon Promise.

System Barriers. Barriers at School 3 were divided into two key areas including frustration with the external lack of trust and resource specific barriers. First, the Oregon Promise mandate was viewed as interference to a Guided Pathways process that was already working. AB stated, "They're never going to give institutions money without strings and say- here, do what you think is right... or even say, we want to see your retention rate increase, here's the money make it happen." Because the school was already making progress, both administrators noted that Oregon Promise was intrusive. BC stated, "Salem, get out of the way... you are putting up barriers that make it harder to

accomplish what we are trying to accomplish.” AB added that, “I would rather not have the legislature tell me how to redesign on-boarding for students based on some practice they heard at some conference... they’re not educators... they need to just trust us.” Both leaders were very consistent on this point.

Resource barriers were also mentioned by both leaders and these centered around the impact of resource barriers on students. BC noted that,

Free is not free... it cost far more than tuition and fees to educate a student. The only thing we control is tuition and fees, but more of our funding comes from tax revenue, property tax and state reimbursement... we get less money per student, which means we are losing money when more students come through the door. Oregon Promise, it does not pay for childcare, books, housing, healthcare... those costs are enormous. If they want to make college free they need to have an entire package; scholarship, food, books... we spend more to support prisoners, when education is what keeps people out of prison.

Culture of Decision Making. School 3 values open communication developed through years of culturally developed norms to achieve buy in for and transparency of change. This open communication is not always easier and relies on an almost stubborn commitment to open, honest, trustworthy governance that is facilitated by institutional stability. Both Vice Presidents and the President had been at the school more than a decade each. Leadership stability was a key to institutional change implementation at School 3. Administration and leadership also value open communication and transparency (also an institutional value). AB acknowledged that, “Honest communication can be difficult but if trust is in place then it appears to be about the issue and not the person.”

As part of the Guided Pathways process, School 3 started by focusing on the

problem (low retention and completion rates). Once the problem was identified (based on data) they brought their institutional culture to bear on solving the problem. AB said, “The culture shift is about saying here’s the problem, figure it out. With Oregon Promise, the legislators, who are not experts, mandated the solution.” This mandate in change was antithetical to the way School 3 accomplishes student success. AB noted

We present the problem, we give some general ideas and we turn our people loose to create solutions. I showed the need. When I showed our retention and completion rates, who could fight against that? No-one could say that was okay and everyone realized they need to step up. When they do step up, I listen, then adjust, and then they believe I understand and they feel more comfortable making more changes.

Both Vice Presidents agreed that in response to the culture of open transparent communication, “... we are getting more creative and making cultural shifts.”

Institutional practices are changing in response to the college cultural norms. Fear of change has been mitigated through the open communication, transparency and the feeling of being heard.

System of Communication. At School 3 their culture is about communication, and their communication style informs governance and decision-making. Having said that, the school still struggles with communication. For example, one Vice President has asked that hiring committees be made up of half student services staff and half instruction to mitigate silo thinking. AB reports that, “(Some people) think there is some underlying agenda. There truly isn’t... we need to think about more than our own little slice of the pie.” All institutions examined discussed the risk, or threat of silo thinking as a barrier to communication.

AB also talked about the role of faculty in student success, “We have been talking

a lot about the role of faculty. It's not just to teach, so if that is what you want to do, please go find someplace else." They are learning to communicate through these challenges. AB stated,

We're in the same place and don't even know we are there until we step on toes. Then we say, wait what are you doing here? Well, this is what I'm doing and this is what you're doing- let's do it together."

Both AB and BC attribute the open communication to their communication styles, which inform the institutional culture. AB said,

I'm really direct and that helps. I believe that I say what I think and feel, good or bad, and so faculty know that. I want them moseying on over here and sitting down and saying, what the heck? What were you thinking? I always ask them to give me feedback and I think that has helped quite a bit.

AB also stressed the importance of doing something with what has been communicated.

For example,

When I asked for appraisal information last year I heard that the deans had too much on their plate. I acted and created an organizational structure that I am hoping we'll move to this year that brings on associate deans. So, faculty come back to me and say, thank you for listening. Now we feel it.

This same transparency is evident with the President and the Board. AB stated,

We say here is the work we want to do and here is how much it takes to fund it. We don't whine and complain. We do. We say what we need and if they don't fund it, we ask what to cut and what to stop doing.

This communication style is very pragmatic and informs the pragmatic culture evident at School 3. School 3 considered this shared governance, but once again shared governance presented itself differently than it did at the other schools. At School 3 the focus was on everyone seeing themselves and owning a part of the solution. Once decisions are made, they are then communicated back out. AB says,

“When I was looking at a divisional reorganization I spoke to every division, every department on and off campus... it was crazy. I did six meetings in one day. I give them my ideas, but then I ask, what’s working? What’s not? What are your ideas and areas of concern? And, I adjust along the way with their answers. When I roll out the final there will be a little piece of everyone in there.

Access, Equity and Educational Value. At school 3 their vision of access, equity and educational value is focused on the social benefits of college, social mobility of students and the priorities of how to spend tax payer money. Unfortunately, these goals were not advanced by the Oregon Promise mandates from the perspective of School 3. Access and equity were a high priority for the Vice President of Student Services. BC stated,

(The Oregon Promise) is not a bad thing. We are helping students whose families would have to take out debt. Most of these students probably aren’t supporting a family in the way that lower income students are helping their family with their financial aid. This is a population of students who already have the greatest chance to succeed and already have the greatest access to college. It’s great we are funding the first two years at a third of the price. It means we budget (tax payer) money and it goes further, but we aren’t providing the money and supports for the lowest income or the most vulnerable students. In our county it costs \$30,000 for a prisoner and community college costs \$3,000. Community college will get them a job and help them stay out of prison... if we get them through a degree their chances of going back to prison go down real fast. Community college is the best investment you can make... You finish welding in two years and start at \$60-80,000 per year. Your mortgage won’t make that good of a return.

Both administrators were bothered by the fact that the Oregon Promise increased access for college going students but did nothing to support the most vulnerable students through access and completion a sentiment that was echoed across all four institutions.

School 4 Vignette

School four was in beautiful Southern Oregon. It was unique in that it had three main campuses of which one was rural, one metropolitan and one located in an industrial center. These three locations demonstrate the varied missions of community colleges. School 4 serves students interested in the trades, those interested in transfer and those looking for skilled certificates and basic skills. They also serve the community in life-long educational pursuits. Each location was approximately one hour apart and this geographic challenge presented unique obstacles in governance and communication.

Leadership longevity at School 4 also presented unique challenges. The Vice President of Student Services had been at the school, in various roles, for over a decade. The Vice President of Instruction came from k-12 and did not have specific higher education experience outside of being an adjunct faculty. The President was new, going on her second year and perceived as authoritarian. The Vice Presidents and other employees explained that the culture was fearful, overwhelmed and over worked. One administrator stated, “We are doing Career Pathways, Guided Pathways, Achieving the Dream, Oregon Promise, a new ERP, an accreditation visit and we are doing it all short-staffed with not enough resources.” Administration was also skeptical about Oregon Promise and explained that the funding was a one-time support and, “...not sufficient to create real organizational change.” The two Vice Presidents were, overall, homogeneous in their reactions to Oregon Promise. They discussed and prioritized most items in a similar way. The Vice President of Instruction felt more strongly about culture overall. The Vice President of Student Services was more concerned with internal barriers.

Both administrators agreed that in response to the Oregon Promise legislation, School 4 did not implement any change. They already required a mandatory student success course and so they used the existing course to address the requirements of Oregon Promise. KE the Vice President of Student Services said,

It was important to understand what the legislation said and it was going to be a student success class. We already had a student success course in place, so it seemed like a no-brainer, low impact solution, to put them through that. I think their intention was that students would get some kind of a unique supportive experience. They didn't get that here.

The Oregon Promise has not made a difference at School 4. KE summarized,

It doesn't really make a difference to us on the bottom line. We have not seen an increase in enrollment based on Oregon Promise and those were the two promises: that we would see more money and that we would see increased enrollment. And in our case neither one of those has particularly been proven to be true.

In response to questions about the lack of impact of the Oregon Promise on School 4, responses clustered under systemic barriers, the culture of decision making, the lack of system of communication and issues of access, equity and educational value. These are illustrated with quotes and data below.

System Barriers. School 4 expressed the most frustration with Oregon Promise in general, particularly with issues surrounding the Oregon Promise design and resource insecurity in general. KG the Vice President of Instruction stated, "The administration of it (Oregon Promise) was just illogical to me. They had some existing systems that could have been used, but they didn't." KE echoed these thoughts by stating that, "It was hard to feel happy for students when it was a nightmare to manage." It was clear that the interviewees were frustrated by the program design as KG stated, "I think the intention

must have been good behind the scenes, but people who don't really understand students put it together.” This was a common theme across institutions.

School 4 had undergone a Reduction in Force (RIF) about one year before the Oregon Promise mandate. During the RIF about 20 positions were not replaced as existing people were moved to cover vacancies. The subsequent morale impact was still a major reality in the lives of the administrators and School 4. The limited financial resources of Oregon Promise added to the frustration about doing more with less. KE stated, “Well, I mean, in the second year, they took the advisor money away. So, we don't have an advisor. And you could see that coming. Any time they fund student services, it doesn't last. We all know that.”

Culture of Decision Making. The internal culture of School 4 was described as competitive in response to resource scarcity. KE said,

We compete with each other instead of saying, okay we could teach 40 developmental students to read if we have a half-time counselor to help them... plans don't work because they require people to compete with limited resources. And so, people are afraid to let anything go thinking they'll never get it back. I think the real problem is that institutions are run by people who put their egos ahead of students...I mean we're a team, but we don't act like a team.

Ultimately decisions about the Oregon Promise interventions were made by one Vice President (KE) who used an existing course with limited discussion. “We already had a student success course in place, so it seemed like a no-brainer. There was no need to communicate the decision out, because nothing changed.”

In response to why change does not happen one Vice President stated,

You could scale everything nationally, right? Especially right now. There are limited resources. And so, we don't make a difference with any social

problem because I won't give up my social problem agenda. This is really important to me and that's really important to you and one of us has got to give first because there are limited resources. And so, we don't make any social change at all because there is no give.

This insightful response could be scaled down to the organizational decision-making at School 4. There were multiple competing agendas, limited resources, and no compromise or discussions being had due to uncertainty of the new leadership, resource scarcity and lack of communication or relationship building. As a result, the status quo was maintained and new interventions to student success were not created or implemented.

System of Communication. Frustration around communication existed between external partners and internal partners. External frustration stemmed from unclear guidelines from the state. School 4 felt that Oregon Promise requirements should have been communicated from the state to local secondary partners. The actual application and directions needed to reach secondary students. However, secondary partners did not seem to have information on the Oregon Promise. KE reported,

It was kind of hard to not throw high school partners under the bus when you were talking to parents. You think to yourself, I don't know why you didn't know about something your high school should have communicated. There was no marketing plan... The marketing wasn't clear and the college was getting criticized from the community. I took I don't know how many community phone calls from high school parents criticizing the college for not telling the high school about this new program.

Several comments were made about internal communication barriers as well. KG stated, "People just keep their head down. They try not to say anything. Anything said could be interpreted the wrong way, there is no humor, no trust, no relationship." This sentiment was echoed from other administrators. KE summarized this by saying,

And they think that my weird way won't work, they don't acknowledge my point of view, because they have their point of view. And I think, I think we should all understand, it really does take everybody's point of view... cross-division, and we haven't seen that happen here. Maybe if we all sat in the room and asked what students need we'd all get on board. And it wouldn't be you against me. We'd be working and I think we'd be shocked how much the other person really wants to help students. They just do it in their own weird way.

These statements illustrated that lack of internal communication had resulted in silo-thinking, lack of collaboration and a general atmosphere of mistrust.

Access, Equity and Educational Value. School 4 felt that the Oregon Promise threw money at access, but that it did nothing to address vulnerable student's needs that would create equity. KG stated,

Other than just throwing money at students to come to college, like the Oregon Promise did, I really wish there would be some internal funding for solving the barriers in the college. And, not just a person. I mean a person can't solve these barriers, right? I wish they would go down the road of looking how to move it up and get away from it being so tied to need so that students could more broadly access it. Particularly, we've talked a lot about that middle chunk of students who are just a notch above pay-all but really a legitimate notch below being comfortable or easily able to afford to go to college. I think there are still a lot of people who feel that the messaging around free college is legitimate and it is not. It is not free college for everybody (emphasis).

Quintain

Initially results were looked at as a group and placed into common and overarching themes. Next the results were presented by individual school. In keeping with the methodology at the end of the individual analysis I looked at the whole once more. Specifically, I examined how the thematic findings played out in relationship to degree of change and sphere of influence in response to the question, "How have colleges brought

to bear institution decision-making in selecting the interventions developed to address stipulations of the Oregon Promise?” In keeping with the original research questions, I also considered what interventions were implemented, if any, and why those interventions were selected.

The revisited conceptual model displays each school in one quadrant (Figure 5). The schools are labeled by their model of governance (shared governance or authoritarian governance) and cultural lens (collegial, bureaucratic and pragmatic). On the left is a bar that indicates degree of change made in response to the Oregon Promise. School one saw a great deal of change and attributed this to the Oregon Promise. School two saw a small amount of change that they attributed to the Oregon Promise. School three had a great deal of change, but none of that was attributed to the Oregon Promise. Likewise, school four did not attribute any change to the Oregon Promise and did not indicate any change had occurred. The three rings in the conceptual model indicate the level of influence the factors (small circles) had on institutional decision-making. The inner-most ring was extremely influential and impacted decision-making. This ring circled the governance model (SG for shared governance and A for Authoritarian governance). The middle sphere was neutral or mildly influential. The outer sphere was least influential in decision-making and where change was made, this ring became obstacles to “overcome”. The individual factors placed on the rings of influence are described in Table 11.

Figure 5. Conceptual Model Revisited

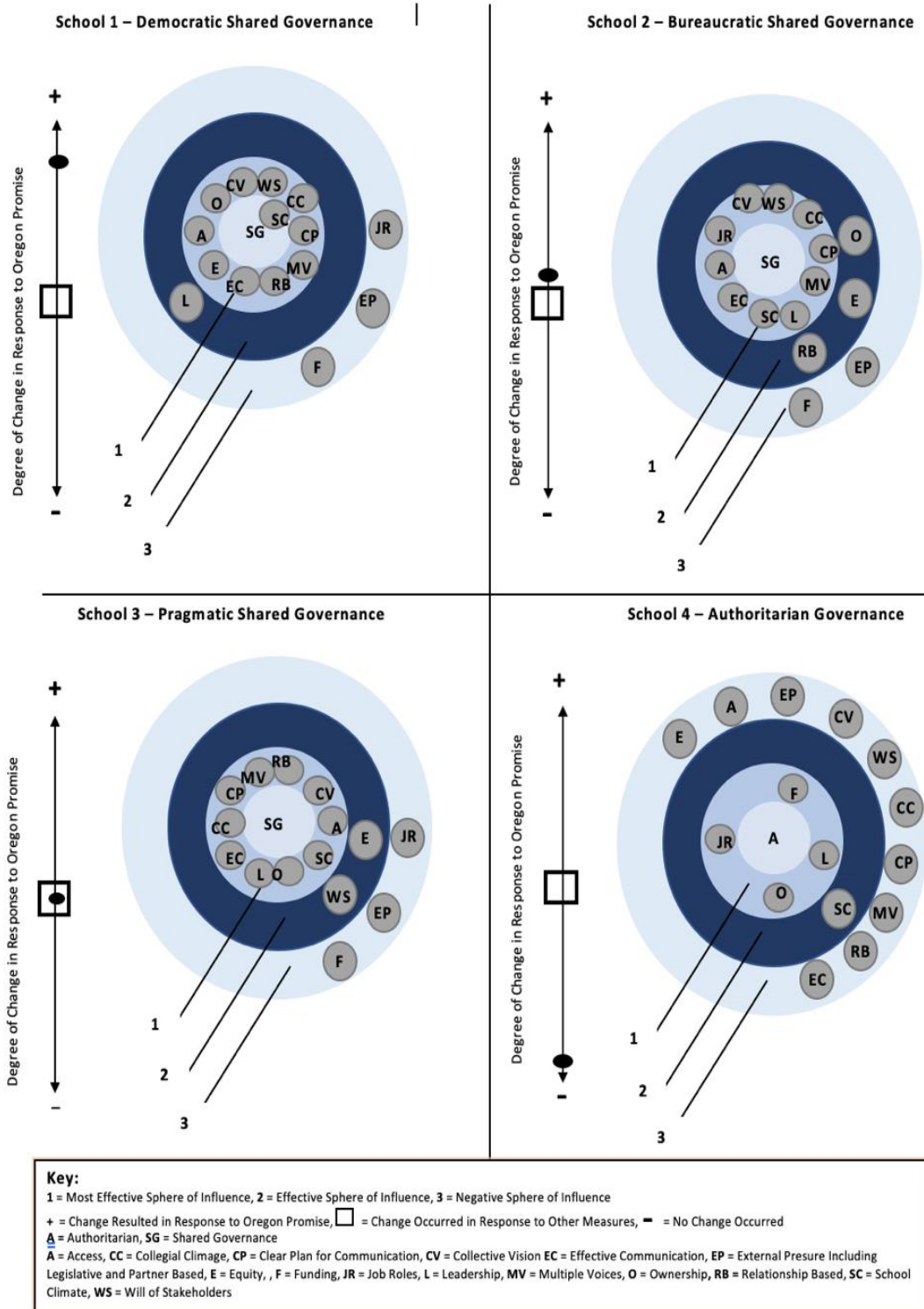


Table 11. Factors

Initial	Factor	Defined as...
A	Access	the desire and focus the school administrators put towards ensuring that as many students could access the school as possible
CC	Collegial Climate	self-described climate of respect, forgiveness, support, and willingness to make mistakes
CV	Collective Voices	decision-making impacted by the collective feedback
CP	Clear Plan for Communication	Clear tools for communication existed and were used
EC	Effective Communication	messages were clear and received as intended
EP	External Pressures	legislature, partners, industry
E	Equity	who accessed Oregon Promise was a factor in decision-making
F	Funding	dollars to support student success initiatives
L	Leadership	transactional or transformational, supported decision-making
JR	Job Roles	traditionally held beliefs about the role administration, faculty and staff play and work within the confines of
MV	Multiple Voices	ability or existing avenues for everyone to have their voices heard in decision making
O	Ownership of Decisions	impact of ownership on decision-making
RB	Relationship based	the impact of relationships across stakeholders and administrators, faculty and staff, relationship credibility
SC	School Climate	collegial, positive, engaged
WS	Will of Stakeholders	ideological state that everyone's will was both recognized and impacted decision-making

Three of the schools implemented student success interventions (changes in practice) though none of these were attributed solely to the Oregon Promise mandate as evidenced by the degree of change in response to the Oregon Promise. For example, School 3 started all new interventions prior to the Oregon Promise and in response to the Guided Pathways initiative already well underway at the institution. Likewise, School 1 had started developing their student success initiatives because of a planned TAACT

grant. Some schools ramped up newly developed interventions in response to the Oregon Promise mandate (Schools 1 and 2). School 4 utilized current practice to meet the intent of the Oregon Promise legislation. Interventions were common across the institutions and included research based best practices such as a mandatory student success course, mandatory advising and ramping up student supports in keeping with the Guided Pathways framework. All schools had a student success course (first year experience) and some form of student advising which were interventions suggested by the state in the Oregon Promise mandate.

Schools varied in their cultural lens. These included democratic shared governance, a more bureaucratic approach to shared governance, a pragmatic approach to shared governance and an authoritarian model of governance. In the democratic culture the will of the people was expressed and followed by democratic vote. In the more bureaucratic culture tradition and hierarchy was key to achieving consensus and conveying decision making. The will of the people was conveyed up and down clear channels of authority until all voices informed decision-making. In the pragmatic culture leaders worked to incorporate and locate the will of the stakeholders within decision-making. In School 1 and 3 decision-making was owned by everyone. In School 2 and School 4 decisions were most often owned by administration.

Only the schools with shared governance implemented changes and interventions. Perhaps more importantly, there were several factors that strongly influenced the ability to create change. These factors included effective communication, relationship based interactions, multiple voices feeling heard, clear plans for communication, a collegial

climate, and a collective vision. There were some factors that varied in influence and these included feelings about the equity of Oregon Promise, a united will of the stakeholders, job roles, and ownership in the solution. Continuity of leadership was also an influencing factor, but it could be either a positive or a negative influencer. School 1 which reported the most positive reaction to change implementation had all the positive factors in the greatest sphere of influence. School 2 which had a more conservative and traditional approach to change implementation had job roles, ownership and feelings about the equity of Oregon Promise in the middle sphere of influence. School 3 had will of the stakeholders and feelings about the equity of Oregon Promise in the middle sphere of influence. This suggests that either these factors can be overcome by the more influential factors or the sheer volume of other influential factors still allows for implementation of change (see Figure 5).

Other factors existed in the negative sphere of influence. These factors included funding and external pressures such as legislative mandate and partner pressure (e.g. community and secondary partners). Change occurred when these factors were pushed out of the sphere of influence and not allowed to negatively impact the decision-making process. Alternatively, when these factors entered the sphere of influence, as seen in School 4, a situation resulted that maintained the status quo.

The factor of job roles, student success centered thinking and leadership continuity were unique. In School 1 and 3 job roles were not impactful and were outside of the sphere of influence. School 1 varied in its longevity of leadership influence and this was not negatively or positively impactful. In School 2 job roles were impactful and

were an important part of how the institution culture was defined. Leadership continuity existed at School 2 and School 3. In School 4 job roles became a defining influencer and when combined with funding and lack of ownership, it created a situation where the status quo was maintained. One other factor is worth mentioning and that is the factor of student centered thinking. Student centered thinking defined School 1 and was evident in their values and core identity. Student centered thinking was influential in the remaining schools as well.

Chapter Summary

The results of this case study are presented using the voices of the participants as a method of authentic portrayal. These are the voices of campus decision makers who are in the best position to most accurately understand change, decision making and interventions that came about because of the Oregon Promise or other initiatives. It is valuable to hear the similarities and differences across their individual cases and the quintain. This chapter first looked at broad themes and findings common across the whole. It then delved into the individual cases to determine influencing factors unique to each institution. It then brought the lens out wider again and considered the impact of the individual factors when applied to the whole picture. The write up included what had been confirmed by data, what important data had been illuminated and how these finding might impact current policy or practice (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2006). The results will next be used to frame further discussion regarding the Oregon Promise and under-funded state mandates. Chapter five of this case study will tie the information gathered back to the

original research questions and offer practical recommendations for future initiatives and change processes.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This case study has been written to fulfill the requirements of a doctorate in education. The primary purpose of this program of study is to examine, uncover, learn and improve practices in education. This multiple case study examined four midsized Oregon community colleges and their subsequent decisions in response to the Oregon Promise which was essentially an under-funded mandate to improve retention and completion for community college students. There is value in examining how schools respond to unfunded or under-funded mandates. Do they make change? If so, how? If they do not make changes, why not? What factors did academic leaders bring to bear that encouraged or discouraged change? This study is especially valuable because it examines this topic from the perspective of community college leadership. Very little research has been done on community colleges leadership, change and decision making. This study adds to this body of research and suggests further venues of study.

This study was conducted utilizing Neo-Institutional theory and Tierney's cultural decision making theory. Academia operates differently from other business models. Academia is proud of its shared governance model. Academia desires to give stakeholders a voice even if that voice requires more time and resources to be heard (Birnbaum, 1988). This diffusion of voices results in stability and academia is slow to change (Birnbaum, 1988). Legislative mandates alone are not sufficient to overcome

institutional cultural barriers. In part this may be because the government is not seen as a cultural component of the academic institution despite their funding and operational power. The legislature is viewed as issuing authoritarian mandates that are antithetical to institutional change. According to theory, imposing this will on colleges may be unproductive and result in the opposite as institutions make no change at all. Institutions lean towards the status quo, particularly without systems of communication and shared governance to buffer resource barriers. Without multiple positive factors for change schemas and norms remain unchanged. One participant in this study alluded to this coercive isomorphism by stating that, “The mandate came from legislators, it was not generated by us for us.” Another stated, “We are the experts and they didn’t listen.” To be more effective, legislative mandates should consider institutional culture and frame change mandates in ways that bring institutional culture to bear on the issue.

Tierney (2008) recognized that external forces, pressures, impact institutional change and suggested that governance is the process by which change happens. This study looked at both formal leadership and internal dynamics. Findings suggested that both positive and negative external factors play a role in impacting change. Tierney (2008) recognized that culture is socially constructed. The Oregon legislature’s original interventions (e.g. student success course) did not attend to cultural influences, but was intended to achieve cultural outcomes (student success, retention and completion). As this study demonstrates, each campus is a unique culture under their own form of governance. Although isomorphism can be seen, each school still retains unique individual cultures. Certainly, one benefit of this study is the recognition that culture

change cannot be mandated as it requires significant human investment of resources in both time and relationship building. Major institutional change requires cultural momentum. Schools that have significant issues such as competition for resources, administrative turn-over and significant division between departments face greater challenges in implementing change. They are more likely to remain status quo as there is not significant cultural momentum to enact impactful change. Change requires a social constructionism that is shared across stakeholders and governance. The Oregon Promise was not this kind of change.

My interest in conducting this study was to understand how academic leadership brought to bear decision making that implemented student success change in response to the Oregon Promise. Community colleges recognize that they must support vulnerable students through to completion. Access alone is not sufficient. Community colleges recognize that they must help each student realize the positive social benefits of a college education. This requires schools to change and implement field best practices. Schools in Oregon are starting to realize this work through Guided Pathway initiatives. Interestingly, this initiative is not using financial resources to drive change but is focusing on the need and engaging institutional culture which may drive change in ways the Oregon Promise initiative did not.

Discussion

In the final stages of this paper it is important to come back to and discuss the results of the research questions asked of this study and follow these answers with recommendations for practice (Belzer and Ryan, 2013).

Table 12. Research Questions Summarized

Research Questions	Answer	Per School
RQ1: How has the Oregon Promise policy impacted mid-sized Oregon community colleges?	Overall, the Oregon Promise mandate did not significantly impact mid-sized Oregon community colleges. Only two of the colleges saw an increase in students (S1, S2).	S1: Implemented a great deal of student success change under TAACT grant. S2: Did have some OP change, but moving towards Guided Pathways work. S3: Great deal of Guided Pathways work prior to OP. S4: no change
RQ2: What interventions have colleges selected to address the needs of Oregon Promise students? Why?	All four schools examined have a student success course, academic advising with varying degrees of requirements and some sort of orientation or onboarding. All schools selected these best practices in the field because they have a demonstrated impact on retention and completion.	S1: student success course, revised advising, onboarding, specific interventions, changing faculty roles S2: student success course, looking at advising, specific OP onboarding, onboarding people and places S3: onboarding, mandatory advising, changing faculty roles S4: student success course
RQ3: How have colleges brought to bear institution decision-making in selecting the interventions developed to address stipulations of the Oregon Promise?	Findings suggested that positive factors related to the institutional culture created an atmosphere that was amenable to change. Many of these positive factors were a direct result of the institution culture and cultivated by academic leaders.	S1: least influenced by external pressures, job roles and funding S2: least influenced by external pressures and funding S3: least influenced by external pressures, job roles and funding S4: most influenced by funding, leadership, job roles, and ownership of decisions

Research Question 1

How has the Oregon Promise policy impacted mid-sized Oregon community colleges?

Overall, the Oregon Promise mandate did not significantly impact mid-sized Oregon community colleges (Table 12). Only two of the colleges saw an increase in students. Three of the colleges did implement additional student success strategies. Universally these implementations were in response to other initiatives currently underway such as Guided Pathways and preparation for a TAACT grant. One school elected to use an existing college success course that was already mandatory for students. Making decisions by adding to current initiatives is not uncommon, particularly when resources are scarce (Tarter and Hoy, 1998; Kezar, 2012). Meyer (2007) discusses this incremental decision making in response to the cybernetic model of governance. Decision-making that is incremental propagates an atmosphere of continued stability which is particularly useful when the result is uncertain and there is not enough institutional will to create change. There was also not enough funding allotted through HB 4076 to make sweeping improvements in retention and completion of vulnerable student populations.

Research Question 2

What interventions have colleges selected to address the needs of Oregon Promise students? Why?

All four schools examined have a student success course, academic advising with varying degrees of requirements and some sort of orientation or onboarding. All schools selected these best practices in the field because they have a demonstrated impact on retention and completion (AACC, 2015). This lends credence to the mimetic aspects of isomorphism as promising practices propagate through the system (Tierney, 2008).

People learned, brought back information, prioritized and developed culturally appropriate solutions where an identified problem existed. Field best practices influenced the isomorphic nature of these implementations. The social constructionist theory is supported here as decisions are made in response to best practices that are then scaled up (Adams and Seagren, 2004; Paolucci and Gambescia, 2007). Kezar (2014) suggests that this can be an effective model of decision-making as administration makes decisions that converge with ground up efforts resulting in institutional change.

Research Question 3

How have colleges brought to bear institution decision-making in selecting the interventions developed to address stipulations of the Oregon Promise?

Perhaps the most interesting part of this study was how colleges brought to bear decision making in response to the under-funded Oregon Promise mandate. Schools that implemented change had strong commitments to both shared governance and systemic processes for facilitating communication across multiple stakeholders. This was summed up best by the comment of a School 1 administrator, “We have a shared governance model, we have 30 some odd committees... We're running out of faculty, staff and administrators to staff all those committees, but part of that (laughs) is because we do things from the ground up.”

When all is said and done, this case study revealed interesting and important results. It informed the field on how academic leaders view decision-making implementation in response to under-funded mandates. The original literature review resulted in my positing that lift factors such as champions, technology and budget would

move initiatives up through external pressures where they would become “fixed” or institutionalized. The actual results have disabused this notion. Findings suggested that positive factors related to the institutional culture created an atmosphere that was amenable to change. Schools with strong values and shared governance were more open and receptive to system change. Many of these positive factors were a direct result of the institution culture and cultivated by academic leaders. Relationships based on honesty, trust and a willingness to risk failing were also important factors in implementing institutional change. Further, these positive factors overcame negative factors. Shared governance was key to implementing change. Where authoritarian leadership and negative communication patterns existed, change implementation did not. Additionally, where these were present innovative solutions were not realized.

The school that saw the most minor impact institutionally showed significant barriers to communication and shared governance. This school was also adjusting to a new president, demonstrated significant barriers (silos) between divisional intentions, had conflicting priorities and felt the lack of relationship based trust. This school clearly exhibited a scarcity mindset and competitive lens that was a significant barrier to any institutional change. Yet lessons can be learned from that as well. Shared governance requires administrators who can facilitate relationship building, include multiple voices, develop a collegial climate, implement a collective vision and ensure that an effective communication plan communicates this back out to stakeholders. Leadership continuity can impact change making and governance in either a positive or a negative manner. Where there are enough positive factors and shared governance, change can occur despite

external pressures, job roles and even funding. Kezar (2012) suggests this occurs through convergence of both top down and bottoms up initiatives with both strong effective leadership and grass-roots change instigators.

This study suggests that decision-making occurs differently at higher educational institutions than at other bureaucratic organizations (Birnbaum, 1988). Decision-making and change occur in response to complex factors that have varying degrees of influence (Kezar, 2014). Kezar (2014) suggests that change occurs in response to building pressure. This study did not necessarily reinforce this finding. It did suggest that positive factors could create a climate conducive to change and that these factors could overcome external pressure. Neo-Institutional theory suggests that change can only be made as institutional character changes impacting culture (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Kezar, 2014, Tierney, 2008). This finding was reinforced by this study. Culture is socially constructed and change implementation depends on positive cultural forces (Tierney, 2008). Clearly knowledge and the knower are influenced by the social, cultural, and political context within which they operate. Though college administrators hold authority and power, this is not alone enough to implement change-making or impact culture. Likewise, legislative mandates are not sufficient to implement change-making or impact culture. Change-making requires these factors and more converging in a culture of shared governance that allows change-making to occur despite bureaucracy and politics. Given this information, I will next discuss recommendations for practice that may facilitate decision-making and change implementation around government rule making moving forward.

Recommendations

This study has shed light on institutional decision making within mid-sized community colleges in Oregon. There are important lessons to be learned from this body of knowledge. In this next section I will structure this knowledge into recommendations for practice. I will start with a recommendation for the national free college conversation, next for Oregon specifically, and will then offer recommendations for practice that may help institutions change and implement student success interventions in response to governmental mandates (such as those desired by the Oregon Promise).

Recommendation One: National Free College

Promise programs are about affordability and helping students access college without taking on additional debt. This is valuable. However, just providing free college is not enough. My recommendation is that as politicians are advocating for free college, attention should also be given to support students once they are enrolled. We should ensure all students benefit from college and do not leave saddled with debt and little to show for it. As stated by one participant, “Students should be given a supportive experience, where they can thrive.” To do this, politicians could advocate for stackable credentials, multiple on and off “ramps” for students who start school, stop and attend to life, and then come back. Student support is not inexpensive and must be funded. A possible solution to this would be to look at who benefitted from the free-college program. Tailor free college programs to address the most vulnerable students and put money that was used to fund less socio-economically vulnerable students towards funding student success interventions for those or all students.

Recommendation Two: Oregon Promise

All schools in this study mentioned the legislative mandate and frustration with the lack of pre-requisite knowledge that informed it. While the legislators did consult higher education practitioners, those practitioners did not feel their recommendations were listened to. One of the practitioners that advised the legislature on the Oregon Promise was KG from School 4. KG stated, “We suggested ways to use existing systems, we brought up issues of equity and access and we explained that they were not recognizing the additional funding that would be required. In the end, they just didn’t listen.” Initially the legislation was very specific by mandating a student success course (coercive isomorphism). Eventually, it became less restrictive but the initial mandate had already resulted in decisions. As stated by KE, “They wanted a student success course and we already had that.” Essentially, the Oregon Promise mandate sought to mandate student success interventions, but in doing so it stifled innovation and systemic change.

This study suggests that mandating change is ineffective without attending to the culture of the school. Therefore, my recommendation is that the legislators consider presenting schools with desired outcomes without suggesting how those outcomes should occur. This would allow schools the flexibility and ownership to attend to culture, current initiatives and the unique communication structures of each school and bring these together to impact change that results in desired outcomes. Admittedly this not a quick and easy solution. However, it has the greatest likelihood of making sustained cultural change that benefits students. Schools want to build systems of student success, but to

make impactful change the culture of the institution must be brought to bear upon the solutions.

Recommendation Three: Shared Governance

The only schools to implement new student success interventions and create change did so through a culture of shared governance. Thus, for the Oregon Promise mandate to have been effective it should have first attended to school culture. My second recommendation for implementing change for colleges desiring to institute system change is to attend to college culture and develop a strong foundation of shared governance. The drawbacks of this approach are the time required and investment of human resources and capital. However, without shared governance it is near impossible to enact change. Stakeholders too want to see improvements in community college outcomes, they just believe that their way is the right one and this can lead to silo thinking. Shared governance does not mean lack of leadership. Leadership is needed to hear the voices, culminate this into a vision and use the socially constructed solution to move the needle on change. One participant from School 1 recounted,

We talked openly with our President and said we need to slow down. We need to pick one to three things at the most and do them really well. Because we're such a ground up institution when it comes to new projects or initiatives or getting stuff done, there's a lot of room for informal leadership. But formal leadership steps in, for the right topics and the right things. Strong leaders listen and use the input to develop new solutions that result in trust, ownership and ultimately cultural change.

Recommendation Four: Systemic Communication

Schools that implemented change had clearly developed implementation plans. Thus, my third recommendation is to implement clear, systemic and purposeful communication plans that ensure all stakeholders are knowledgeable about the change implementation. When in doubt communicate more. The impact of systemic positive communication cannot be understated. On a campus where the culture is reported as highly positive, the culture is socially constructed through purposeful communication. As recounted by an administrator at School 3,

With any change, I roll it out with every department...talking... asking for their ideas. Then I take them and adjust it a little along the way. At the end, no one's going to be surprised, everyone's had a voice and that's going to go a long way.

On campuses where the culture was described as competitive and siloed, communication was clearly focused on individual needs. Divisions lost the ability to communicate openly when trust and relationship was missing. Additionally, ego was a barrier to communication (Birnbaum 1988; Kezar, 2013). Time spent communicating is not wasted and communication is key for getting all stakeholders involved and on task. The schools that communicated best had tools such as matrixes and email folders they used to influence and inform the change process. This allowed for communication to occur purposefully and frequently.

Communication should be extended both internally and externally. One of the primary concerns around the Oregon Promise was the lack of communication. By communicating the Oregon Promise to communities and secondary partners, the legislators could have created awareness and increased student access (Ash, 2015).

School 1 communicated what they thought would happen externally and saw an increase in student attendance. School 4 experienced pressure from the community in response to a lack of external communication and did not see an increase in student enrollment. The legislature could have increased access with better communication strategies.

Recommendation Five: Culture and Value Development

It is normal for those in power to assume that they make decisions that will both be implemented and work. However, in academia with shared governance it does not work this way. And this is something the bureaucracy struggles to understand. Schools with decision makers who make decisions unilaterally, miss this important opportunity to build culture and genuinely build change. Seymour (2016) describes this momentum as building a virtuous cycle and concludes that it leads to bold imaginings and creative problem solving. The history of academia is steeped in the value of independence (Thelin, 2011). Thus, my fourth recommendation is for schools to connect their organizational culture to their values. Specifically, academic leaders need to focus change implementation around their student success values. Institutions each have their own culture, their own struggles and their own strengths. However, values can be the factor by which to draw people in to a common message. As stated by School 2, “All of our conversations are focused on student success. We understand that this is what we do. And we can make change if we see the connection to student success.” Only by being part of that culture can you understand how to implement and drive change within an institution. This is yet another reason why unfunded and under-funded mandates fail to get desired results.

Limitations

Although the goal of the legislative mandate SB 81 was to force community colleges to make changes that positively impact retention and completion, this study did not explore whether the changes did in fact increase retention and completion. Rather, this qualitative case study explored the perception of community college administrators at four mid-sized Oregon community colleges in response to the under-funded mandate. Of interest was whether change was implemented and if so, why and how. The value of the case study is to uncover how things work, not to determine if they do (Yin, 2014). The actual change and results of change were not studied. This must be considered an important limitation of this work.

Because I am a participant-observer and in a position of power it is also possible that participants did not fully disclose all relevant information (Yin, 2014). Utilizing a consistent and planned methodology helped to mitigate this concern. Additionally, results were triangulated (e.g. field journals, follow up surveys, recordings). Still, the possibility exists that the findings are not what an outside researcher may find and this is a study limitation. It is also possible that as a participant-observer, I maintained a degree of bias. Leadership and change are important to me as a person and as my role as a college administrator. For this reason, I utilized journaling, reflection and outside input to challenge my results. I also fully committed to the interpretive framework and theoretical underpinnings throughout this case study. It should be noted that a different interpretive framework could lead to other findings (Yin, 2014). This study also focused on the perspectives of academic leaders and administrators. Therefore, my results may not

reflect the perspectives of those that implement change. Lastly, I utilized only mid-sized institutions. For this reason, it may not be reflective of small or large institutions who may have experienced different issues in response to the Oregon Promise mandate.

Areas for Further Study

A quantitative study that examines the persistence and completion rates of Oregon Promise students could extend this current study and look at effectiveness of student success interventions. Change for the sake of change is not necessarily productive given the resources required. Examining the effectiveness of the changes implemented at these schools would further speak to the benefits of student centered change. It would also reinforce the importance of change implementation. Likewise, a quantitative study that examines the barriers to change or the perspective of change implementers would extend the findings of this study. I would also like to do a study of several colleges that have made significant change and examine this from a phenomenological perspective to understand how the change originated and traveled through the system. Each of these proposals would further inform this initial research.

In my literature review, I uncovered some emerging research (Paige & Scott-Clayton, 2016) that suggests that students equate Promise acts with an investment into their success. It would be interesting to examine if Oregon Promise students graduate and complete at higher rates than non-Promise peers and if so, if it is related to the “believed investment”. Finally, a longitudinal look at Oregon Promise students would be beneficial to determine if they retain, if they complete and if they extend their education to the bachelors or graduate level as this would be beneficial to the state. If positive, it would

suggest that Promise resources are making a positive impact and support continued expansion. If not, it could divert resources to more effective practices.

Chapter Summary

Community college retention and completion is a major concern to staff, faculty, administrators and the legislature. However, under-funded mandates do not appear to be the mechanism for enacting change within institutions. Change requires significant resources of time, communication and culture change. Further, it is suggested that change happens best in shared governance models where multiple change factors are considered. The Oregon Promise did not provide resources or a shared vision that was bought into. It failed to provide positive cultural factors that influence change. One administrator explained this by stating that,

We all desire to do good things for students. We did not get into this business for money or fame. We want to do good things. But getting things done is hard. It requires a ton of communication, a ton of shared vision planning, and a shared commitment to the vision. You don't get that by mandating it. You don't get that by saying "make it so". You only get that by defining the problem, formulating a shared solution, and then having sufficient resources to make it so. It takes a strong, experienced administration, with a whole lot of grit, to make it happen.

As social constructionism suggests, we use categories, language, and concepts to make sense of the world around us. Our concepts are framed by history and culture but they are relative and sustained through social practice (norms). Knowledge is perception and not necessarily fact. From a critical social perspective, the Oregon Promise did not drive/impact the success or even access of the most vulnerable students, it was not designed to. That being said, a hallmark of the four schools studies here is that

community college administrators desire to address the needs of the most vulnerable students and this is cause for hope.

Tierney's Decision Making Model was largely supported by this work. External forces impact change but not always in the way we might think (e.g. overcoming funding, external pressures purposely). The Oregon Promise did not attend to cultural implications and became something to overcome. Further, institutional cultures vary in terms of communication, understanding of historical contexts, stories, language, ideology, behavior and decision-making. These variances are largely culturally based but there are webs of significance that impact decision-making. Shared goals including shared mission, information, socialization, strategy, leadership and governance is key.

Neo-Institutional theory is also largely supported by this work. External and internal forces matter, but there are buffering factors. Change is difficult in the face of history, internal organizational pressures and external pressures such as societal goals and lack of funding. Change is difficult in the face of normative pressures. Practices become embedded over time and difficult to change. But internal schemas can adapt to new norms. And where new schemas cannot be adopted the status quo is maintained.

Decision-making is impacted by institutional culture, size, geography and community needs. Finally, leaders must articulate decisions purposefully and systemically to enact change. This research has been a great experience and my hope is that it will be used to further implement positive change for all community college students. My hope is that this research might also be used by the state and legislature to understand how to

encourage change effectively so that all students but particularly the most vulnerable, are supported through retention and completion.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TABLE OF OREGON COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Oregon's 17 Community Colleges	FTE	Oregon Promise Awards	Carnegie Classification of Size	Environmental Classification
Portland	33,703	1559	Large	Urban
Lane	14,381	620	Large	Urban
Chemeketa	13,925	1045	Large	Urban
Mount Hood	9,801	559	Large	Suburban
Clackamas	8,101	512	Medium	Suburban
Linn Benton	7,122	637	Medium	Suburban
Central	6,997	566	Medium	Rural
Rogue	5,597	324	Medium	Rural
Umpqua	3,407	225	Small	Rural
Treasure Valley	3,187	69	Small	Rural
South Western	3,115	195	Small	Coastal
Blue Mountain	2,710	136	Small	Rural
Klamath	1,654	124	Very Small	Rural
Clatsop	1,392	59	Very Small	Coastal
Columbia Gorge	1,075	94	Very Small	Rural/Suburban
Oregon Coast	552	0	Very Small	Coastal
Tillamook Bay	505	21	Very Small	Coastal

*Data gathered from HECC (2017) website www.hecc.org

APPENDIX B

EMAIL OF INTRODUCTION

Oregon Promise: A Look at Institutions and Decisions Made as a Result of Policy
Teresa Rivenes, Montana State University
trivenes@rogucecc.edu

Dear Vice President ____,

Thank you for taking the time to read this email and to participate in this study. This study examines how institutional decision makers make decisions relative to the Oregon Promise under-funded mandate to support vulnerable students. The purpose of the study is to identify, understand, illustrate and construct the organizational decision-making processes, made by your leadership, in response to the Oregon Promise. Specifically, the research questions are;

- 1) How has the Oregon Promise policy impacted mid-sized Oregon community colleges?
- 2) What interventions have colleges selected to address the needs of Oregon Promise students? Why?
- 3) How have colleges brought to bear institution decision-making in selecting the interventions developed to address stipulations of the Oregon Promise?

This email has three purposes.

The first purpose is to inform you about this research study and thank you for agreeing to participate.

The second purpose is to identify your decision-making team. Your decision-making team consists of those individuals who are responsible for making and ensuring that major decisions ripple out across your institution. This team will consist of, at a minimum, the Vice President(s) in charge of Instruction and Student Services. It may also include members of your Executive Team, your Chief Financial Officer, your Institutional Researcher, a member of the faculty senate or student government. The constitution of this team is up to you, **I simply ask that you identify the important decision makers who truly make the official call on detailed strategic action at your school.** If this is you, no need to take further action on this topic. If it includes others, please email me their names and positions. I would like to reach out to them as well.

The third purpose of this email is to help prepare for your interview. **The only thing you will need to bring to your interview is a curricula vita or resume.** This document will help me understand the experience and longevity of each participant. On the day of the interview I will explain the research, hand out consent forms, collect vitas/resumes, and conduct the interview (questions attached). I look forward to our meeting and learning from you.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated, and I thank you in advance for your participation. **I will see you, at XXX, on XXX at approximately XXX.**

~ Teresa

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN
RESEARCH AT MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY**

Project Title: Oregon Promise: A Look at Institutions and Decisions Made as a Result of Policy

Description: You are being asked to participate in a research study exploring how institutional decision makers make decisions relative to the Oregon Promise under-funded mandate to support vulnerable students. The purpose of the study is to identify, understand illustrate and construct the organizational decision-making processes, made by your leadership team, in response to the Oregon Promise.

Procedures Involved: Participation is voluntary. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in a videotaped focus group, face-to-face, lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. You will also be asked to complete a brief follow up questionnaire and submit a resume or vita.

Risks and Benefits: There are very few foreseen risks to the participants in this study. Identities of participants will be kept private and confidential. It is possible that some of the questions may results in feelings of discomfort about your institution or decision-making process. Please know that these will be looked at in mass, across multiple institutions, and will not be personally identifiable. There are no direct benefits to you. However, it is hoped that the results of the study will assist in development of engaged scholarship and thereby benefit partnerships between communities and higher education.

Time Involvement: Your participation in this study will take place between November 2016 and December 2017. Your participation will consist of an audio-taped interview lasting approximately 60-90 minutes, completion of a follow-up questionnaire with estimated time to complete at fifteen minutes or less, and submission of a resume or vita.

Funding: N/A **Cost:** None

Confidentiality: Your name and contact information will be stored separately from the digital interview recording. Your individual data will be known only through a pseudo name and will not be able to be connected to you. These data will be stored securely, and will be destroyed after one year. Having said that, the schools will be identified (or reasonably easy to recognize given the study replication procedures). Any issues with identification will be individually negotiated and recorded.

Participant's Rights: Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop participating at any time with no penalty. This research has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board at Montana State University. If you have any questions or concerns about this research project, you may contact Teresa Rivenes, Department of Education, Montana

State University, Bozeman, MT (Phone: 541.226.1394 and Email: trivenes@montana.edu). If you have any questions about the rights of human subjects, please contact the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Mark Quinn, 406-994-4707.

*****AUTHORIZATION: I have read the above and understand the discomforts, inconvenience and risk of this study. I, _____ (*name of subject*), agree to participate in this research. I understand that I may later refuse to participate and that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Signed:

_____ Date: _____

Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

Oregon Promise: A Look at Institutions and Decisions Made as a Result of Policy
Teresa Rivenes, Montana State University
trivenes@rognuecc.edu

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today and participate in this study. The purpose of the study is to identify, understand illustrate and construct the organizational decision-making processes, made by your leadership team, in response to the Oregon Promise. Specifically, the research questions are; How has the Oregon Promise policy impacted mid-sized Oregon community colleges? What interventions have colleges selected to address the needs of Oregon Promise students? Why? How have colleges brought to bear institution decision-making in selecting the interventions developed to address stipulations of the Oregon Promise?

- Review consent form and obtain signature.
- Do you have any questions about the study, this interview, or other related topics?
- Over the next 60-90 minutes, I will ask several questions about the Oregon Promise, decision-making and student success factors at your college. Please answer honestly and completely.
- I will conclude by collecting your resumes/vita, and answering any questions you may have.
- It is possible, that you may be asked for follow up information. If so, this will be completed by a brief email questionnaire, that will not take more than 10-15 minutes to complete.

Research Questions	Questions/Probes	Notes
<p>RQ1: How has the Oregon Promise policy impacted mid-sized Oregon community colleges?</p>	<p>When did you start thinking about the Oregon Promise? (Who did you think would take advantage of OP? Who has? Research?)</p> <p>What, if anything, excited you about the idea?</p> <p>What, if anything, worried/concerned you? (Economic concerns)</p> <p>How has this impacted the way you work and plan?</p> <p>Who are the key decision makers about student success at this college?</p> <p>How would you describe the leadership process at your school, and how is this seen in the Oregon Promise intervention planning?</p>	
<p>RQ2: What interventions have colleges selected to address the needs of Oregon Promise students? Why?</p>	<p>How did you decide upon these interventions? (describe process)</p> <p>What formal meetings were held, and how often? What did those look like?</p> <p>Was the decision about interventions unanimous? If not, how did you resolve issues?</p> <p>Describe the process by which this decision was reached (probe for key obstacles, challenges and turning points, best practices).</p> <p>Did institutional culture impact the decision-making process? If so, how?</p> <p>What was your role in the process?</p> <p>How did you convey the decision to others?</p> <p>How was the decision implemented? How was it received on campus? (speed)</p> <p>Did decision makers cite data when they conveyed the decision to others at the college? If so, which data were cited?</p>	

<p>RQ3: How have colleges brought to bear institution decision-making in selecting the interventions developed to address stipulations of the Oregon Promise?</p>	<p>How did you prioritize interventions? (External and internal forces)</p> <p>Is this new work or building upon something you already were doing?</p> <p>What was the motivation, or purpose of behind, selecting these strategies?</p> <p>What did you ultimately want to achieve through this decision? Why?</p> <p>Did you consider the reaction of the state, students, employees, or public?</p>	
	<p>If you have had a decision-making role at another institution how did that decision-making process compare to this one?</p> <p>Is there anything else you think I should know about how the Oregon Promise has impacted you?</p>	

APPENDIX E

CONTACT SHEET FOR PERSONAL JOURNALING

Oregon Promise: A Look at Institutions and Decisions Made as a Result of Policy
 Teresa Rivenes, Montana State University
trivenes@rognuecc.edu

Contact Summary Sheet

Contact Type: Recording___ Interview___ Questionnaire___

Date: Today’s Date: Location:

1. *What stood out about this contact?*
2. *What were the main issues or themes?*
3. *Summarize the information you got on each of the target questions you had for this contact?*

<i>Research Questions</i>	<i>Information</i>
How has the Oregon Promise policy impacted mid-sized Oregon community colleges?	
What interventions have colleges selected to address the needs of Oregon Promise students? Why?	
How have colleges brought to bear institution decision-making in selecting the interventions developed	

to address stipulations of the Oregon Promise?	
<i>Other</i>	

4. *Is there anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating or important in this contact?*
5. *What new (or remaining) target questions do you have in considering the next contact with this person?*
6. *Is follow up needed?*

(adapted from Miles and Huberman, 1984)

APPENDIX F

WRITTEN QUESTIONNAIRE

Written Questionnaire (Follow Up)

Oregon Promise: A Look at Institutions and Decisions Made as a Result of Policy
Teresa Rivenes, Montana State University
trivenes@rognuecc.edu

1. *In reflecting on your interview, were you able to accurately and honestly convey your thoughts?*

2. *Did you have thoughts that you did not share? If so, please share them here.*

3. *Was anyone missing from the discussion that should have been here? Who?*

4. *Is there anything else that you want me to know about the Oregon Promise, strategies for student success or decision-making at your college?*

APPENDIX G

DOCUMENT SUMMARY FORM

Oregon Promise: A Look at Institutions and Decisions Made as a Result of Policy
Teresa Rivenes, Montana State University
trivenes@rognuecc.edu

Document Source:

Date Received:

Name or description of document:

Where was document gathered/collected from?

What is history of document?

What guarantee is there that document is what it pretends to be?

Is the document complete?

Original?

Has it been tampered with?

Edited?

Is the document genuine?

Who is the author?

What is the purpose of document? What is the intended audience?

Is there bias present in the document?

APPENDIX H

INITIAL CODING FORM

Initials for this interviewee:___

School number: ____

Constraints or Issues:

Theme 1:

Prominence:

Use:

Related to data/reading:

Differ from data/reading:

Theme 2:

Prominence:

Use:

Related to data/reading:

Differ from data/reading:

Theme 3:

Prominence:

Use:

Related to data/reading:

Differ from data/reading:

Theme 4:

Prominence:

Use:

Related to data/reading:

Differ from data/reading:

(repeated as needed)

Conceptual Factors:

Findings:

Possible excerpts for multicase report (and page number):

Additional Thoughts:

Summary of Themes:

1.

2.

3.

4.

(adapted from Stake, 2006)

APPENDIX I

ACROSS CASE CODING FORM

Utility of Cases					
H: high utility, M: middling utility, L: low utility					
Original Themes					
Theme 1					
Theme 2					
Theme 3					
Theme 4					
Theme 5					
Theme 6					
Theme 7					
Multi-Case Themes					
Theme 1					
Theme 2					
Theme 3					
Theme 14					

(Stake, 2006)

APPENDIX J

DATA THEMES- NODES

Name	Description	Files	References
Access & Equity	whose coming in the doors, who Oregon Promise benefits, middle class	6	28
Culture of Change	change, cultural change, spark, instigation	7	112
Data based decision	data based thinking, how data is used for decision making	7	24
Decision Making	best practices for decision making, setting up a culture of change, pre decision	5	20
Formal Governance	role responsibility, responsibility by title	6	25
Student Centered Thinking	student first decision making, student focused culture, desire to do right by students	6	46
Educational Value	value of education for students, society, state, community college value	5	17
External Pressure	partners, business expectations, secondary challenges, employer challenges, four year challenges, legislative expectations	5	17
Legislation	state decision making, top down, lack of knowledge about systems, funding behind the work and expecting innovation, bureaucratic approach	6	33
Personal Feelings About OP	personal reactions to Oregon Promise	0	0
Excited		3	5
Resentment		2	3
Skepticism		4	18
System of Communication	how, why, when to communicate, best practices, communication is governance and culture	7	52

Name	Description	Files	References
Systemic Barriers	budgets, legislation, stand-alone systems, high resource systems	7	34
Internal Barriers	competition for resources, silo thinking, working independently, power differential, different work structures, bitterness	7	67
Multiple Initiatives	trying to do too many things at one time, shiny balls	4	12
Resource Barriers	funding, people, time, workloads, system improvements or rigidity, uncertainty in resource awards	7	50

APPENDIX K

Ranked Themes

Themes	Freq	Rank
Access, Equity & Educational Value	83	3
Culture of Decision Making	173	2
System of Communication	35	4
Systemic Barriers	244	1

APPENDIX L

PRIORITIZATION, RANK AND FREQUENCY PER CASE, INDIVIDUAL AND
QUINTAIN

Themes	S1	S	A	BJ	S2	S	DP	S3	S	AB	BC	S4	S	KE	KG
	T	1	M		T	2		T	3			T	4		
	R	R	R		R	R		R	R			R	R		
Access, Equity & Educational Value	22T	3	22T	0T	18T	3	18T	17T	3	16T	1T	26T	3	9T	17T
A/E	12T		12M	0L	6T		6L	9T		8L	1L	17T		9L	8L
Ed Value	10T		10M	0L	12T		12M	8T		8L	0L	9T		0L	9L
Culture of Decision Making	41T	2	19T	22T	27T	2	27H	52T	2	22H	30H	53T	2	21H	32H
Culture (general)	2T		1L	1L	1T		1L	6		1L	5L	4T		3L	1L
Data Based Decision Making	7T		4L	3L	10T		10M	19		8L	11L	18T		9L	9L
Decision Making	14T		6L	8L	7T		7L	5		5L	0L	11T		0L	11M
Formal Governance	8T		5L	3L	5T		5L	11		0L	11M	11T		0L	11M
Student Centered Thinking	10T		3L	7L	4T		4L	11		8L	3L	9T		9L	0L
System of Communication	10T	4	7L	3L	3T	4	3L	11T	4	2L	9L	11T	4	6L	5L
Systemic Barriers	67T	1	59T	8T	58T	1	58T	62T	1	34T	28T	54T	1	24T	30T
Internal Barriers	15T		12M	3L	12T		12M	15		6L	9L	7T		2L	5L
Barriers	11T		9L	2L	2T		2L	11		7L	4L	6T		1L	5L
Multiple Initiatives	8T		8L	0L	9T		9L	14		14M	0L	11T		0L	11M
Resource Barriers	5T		2L	3L	7T		7L	6		4L	2L	10T		6L	4L
External Pressures	14T		14M	0L	14T		14M	7T		0L	7L	12T		9L	3L
Legislation	14T		14M	0L	14T		14M	9T		3L	6L	8T		6L	2L

0-9 = L, 10-15 = M, 16+ = H, T = Total, R = Rank

APPENDIX M

COMPILATION OF THEMES BY PRIORITY FOR SCHOOL 1

	Access, Equity & Ed Value	Culture	Com	Bar.
School Priority	3rd	2nd	4 th	1st
S1	22	41	10	67
AM	22/2nd	19/3rd	7/4th	59/1st
BJ	0/4 th	22/1st	3/3rd	8/2nd

APPENDIX N

COMPILATION OF THEMES BY PRIORITY FOR SCHOOL 2

	Access, Equity & Ed Value	Culture	Com	Bar.
School Priority	3rd	2nd	4 th	1 st
S2	18	27	3	58
DP	18	27	3	58

APPENDIX O

COMPILATION OF THEMES BY PRIORITY FOR SCHOOL 3

	Access, Equity & Ed Value	Culture	Com	Bar.
School Priority	3rd	2nd	4 th	1st
S3	17	52	11	62
AB	16/ 3rd	22/ 2nd	2/4 th	34/ 1st
BC	0/4 th	30/1st	9/3rd	28/2nd

APPENDIX P

COMPILATION OF THEMES BY PRIORITY FOR SCHOOL 4

	Access, Equity & Ed Value	Culture	Com	Bar.
School Priority	3rd	2nd	4 th	1st
S4	26	53	11	54
KE	9/3 rd	21/2 nd	6/4 th	24/1 st
KG	17/3 rd	32/1 st	5/4 th	30/2 nd