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### Academic and Student Affairs Educators Make Meaning of Their Collaboration on Campus

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS EDUCATORS  
MAKE MEANING OF THEIR COLLABORATION  
ON CAMPUS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Genia Hope Lemonedes

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences  
Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership

May, 2018

This Dissertation by: Genia Hope Lemonedes

Entitled: *Academic and Student Affairs Educators Make Meaning of Their Collaboration on Campus*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences and Program of Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership

Accepted by the Doctoral Committee

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Accepted by the Graduate School

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## **ABSTRACT**

Lemonedes, Genia Hope. *Academic and student affairs educators make meaning of their collaboration on campus*. Published Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, 2018.

Operating from a constructivist paradigm and utilizing narrative inquiry, the purpose of this inquiry was to improve understanding of academic and student affairs collaboration on a college campus. Seven mid-level academic and student affairs educators participated in this study, which was conducted at a four-year, public university in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. Of the participants, four were positioned within academic affairs offices while three were within student affairs offices on campus. All participants were engaged in academic and student affairs collaborations associated with First-Year Experience (FYE) and/or Experiential Learning programming.

Participants were asked what collaboration means to them and how they experience such initiatives at this university. Aspects of what constitutes a successful collaboration, along with benefits and influences of collaboration were also addressed. Discussion revealed the importance of inclusivity, dedication, commitment, and support from collaborative partners, as well as university leaders. Moreover, without visionary and transformational approaches from university leaders, collaborative initiatives stall, or worse, fail. As such, senior leaders are encouraged to progress from status-quo practice and re-design aspects of organizational and educational practice to support collaborative initiatives which are integral to a college students' experience.

**DEDICATION**

TO ALL EDUCATORS  
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank family, friends, and colleagues who helped and supported me through this wonderful educational journey. To begin, I would like to thank my father, Michael Lemonedes. Throughout my life, my father inspired and encouraged me to be a strong and independent woman. He supported all of my aspirations and endeavors while instilling the importance of education for the pursuit of life-long dreams. While my dad passed away and cannot be here, his presence, love, support, and inspiration lives in my heart. Thank you dad, because if it were not for you, I would not be here today. I would also like to thank my brother, James Lemonedes. Jim is an amazing big brother! Jim always stood by me and has been an incredible role-model throughout my life. He always helps me see the larger picture, and I know I can always count on his encouragement and support. Jim continues to inspire me and his love and support is immeasurable. Thank you big brother, I love you.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The evolving principles of learning, continually informed by future advances in our understanding and knowledge of the learning process, hold great promise for improved student learning. By applying these principles to the practice of teaching, the development of curricula, the design of learning environments, and the assessment of learning, we will achieve more powerful learning. Realizing the full benefit of these applications depends upon collaborative efforts between academic and student affairs professionals. (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001, p. 36-37)

Within higher education, both academic and student affairs educators are responsible for increasing student learning, growth, and development (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016). Hence, academic and student affairs educators are encouraged to work more collaboratively to create holistic learning environments for college students (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Yaun, Nguyen, & Gardea, 2018). Utilization of academic and student affairs partnerships such as first-year experience programs, learning communities, faculty-in-residence programs, as well as the creation of seamless learning environments, are linked to improved student learning, increased student engagement, and increased institutional effectiveness (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Gulley & Mullendore, 2014; Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Yaun et al., 2018). Additionally, academic and student affairs partnerships have been shown to enhance retention and improve graduation rates of college students (Kezar, 2017; Yaun et al., 2018). While benefits of academic and

student affairs partnerships are apparent, levels of disconnection due to structural and professional barriers are still noted within higher education (Pace, Blumreich, & Merkle, 2006).

A variety of barriers between academic and student affairs educators exist in academic organizations, making collaborative efforts challenging (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Philpott & Strange, 2003). One barrier involves bureaucratic structuring found within organizations of higher education. Customary to these organizational structures are hierarchal designs with corresponding lines of communication and decision making (Birnbaum, 1988; Manning, 2013). Vertical lines of communication are established, limiting the flow of information through the organization (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Consequently, siloed units form, creating fragmentation, separation, and isolation common to higher education (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pace et al., 2006; Whitt, 2011). Since partnerships require interactions among professionals within an organization, siloed effects can impede efforts toward the creation of more collaborative learning environments between academic (i.e., faculty) and student affairs educators.

Additional barriers affecting such partnerships across campus include decreased understanding of professional responsibilities on campus, as well as professional differences between faculty and student affairs educators (Kezar, 2017). While faculty and student affairs educators may be familiar with each other's roles on campus, they may not have a good understanding of the specific services and responsibilities of each professional, particularly regarding student learning (Kezar, 2017; Whitt, 2011). Limited understanding such as this can result in overlooking the benefits of collaborations (Kezar,

2017). Additionally, differences in working structures, responsibilities, and reward structures, further contribute to separation between faculty and student affairs educators, thus making the formation of partnerships/collaborations on campus challenging (Crafts, First, & Satwicz, 2001; Kezar, 2001a, 2017; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Philpott & Strange, 2003).

Because academic and student affairs collaborations contribute to student success (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Gulley & Mullendore, 2014; Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh et al., 2005; Yaun et al., 2018), this study was designed to gain a fuller understanding of partnerships among faculty and student affairs educators on a college campus. Gaining such insight may subsequently help guide faculty, student affairs educators, and senior university leaders toward the creation of sustainable collaborations across campus. More importantly, because academic and student affairs partnerships/collaborations enhance the college student experience (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh et al., 2005; Yaun et al., 2018), it is the responsibility of administrators and educators to understand as much as possible about these endeavors.

### **Statement of the Problem**

College students' learning takes place in and out of the classroom environment (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000). Faculty primarily function within classroom environments, focusing on development of students' critical thinking skills and content knowledge (Guarasci, 2001). Student affairs educators, on the other hand, primarily function outside of classroom environments, focusing on development of students' voice and concept of self (Guarasci, 2001; Patton, et al., 2016). Although differences between these organizational units exist,

the underlying goal of improving student learning, growth, and development is the same, creating the need for more collaborative working relationships on college campuses (Feldman Barr, 2013; Kezar, 2001b, 2017; Whitt, 2011).

Since responsibilities for increasing student learning and growth are delegated to faculty and student affairs educators, collaboration among these professionals is crucial to enhance student learning (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Yaun et al., 2018). However, while many institutions of higher education have implemented academic and student affairs collaborative efforts (e.g., first-year experience programs, learning communities, faculty-in-residence programs) challenges regarding structural and professional differences between units exist (Carpenter, Patitu, & Cuyjet, 1999; Crafts et al., 2001; Guarasci, 2001; Gulley & Mullendore, 2014; Kezar, 2017; Philpott & Strange, 2003). When challenges become too overwhelming for administrators, hesitation resulting in subsequent decreased collaborative efforts can occur (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Guarasci, 2001; Harrison, 2013; Kezar, 2001a; Kezar & Lester, 2009) and diminish holistic learning.

Structural barriers to academic and student affairs partnerships/collaborations within higher education involve the organization's structure and culture, in addition to elements of power and leadership prevalent on campus (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Professional barriers, on the other hand, consist of differing responsibilities and working structures between academic and student affairs educators (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Philpott & Strange, 2003). While these barriers can be overwhelming, academic and student affairs collaborations are supported in the literature and are becoming more frequent occurrences across college campuses (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Frost, Strom,

Downey, Schultz, & Holland, 2010; Guarasci, 2001; Harrison, 2013; Kezar, 2001a, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Manning, Kinzie, & Schuh, 2014; Ozaki & Hornak, 2014). Since the importance of collaboration is apparent, and faculty and student affairs collaborations are occurring more frequently on college campuses, additional information is needed regarding developing and sustaining such partnerships.

### **Purpose of Study**

Because this inquiry was designed to examine partnerships on a college campus, definitions regarding terminology are helpful. While terms such as coordination, collaboration, and partnerships are used interchangeably throughout the literature, there are differentiations (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). Typically, coordination involves working together on tasks and sharing information, whereas collaboration involves “joint goals, a reliance on each other to accomplish those goals, joint planning, and often power sharing” (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016, p. 434). Further, collaboration “must be an interactive process (relationship over time) and the groups must develop shared rules, norms, and structures” (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016, p. 434). Consequently, partnerships can either refer to coordination or collaboration and many times they begin with the former and progress to the latter (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). While interactions between faculty and student affairs educators occur in a variety of ways across campus (e.g., committees, task forces, advising), partnerships aimed at fostering student growth and development to improve a student’s college experience were the focus of this inquiry.

Understanding the importance of academic and student affairs collaborations, student affairs professional organizations published numerous documents (i.e., *Student Learning Imperative* and *Principles of Good Practice*) emphasizing the need for



academic and student affairs educators to work together in promoting student learning, growth, and development (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; College Student Educators International [ACPA], 1994; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education [NASPA], 1997). Additional research further supports academic and student affairs collaborations indicating that learning is enhanced when students receive support from a variety of sources, including academic and student affairs educators (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh et al., 2005). A consistent theme among such publications reinforced student affairs professionals as educators and emphasized “the importance of building partnerships with other educators for the benefit of students” (Manning, et al., 2014, p. 17). Fundamentally, the use of academic and student affairs collaborations within higher education is essential to improving the college experience and is thus encouraged across college campuses (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Frost et al., 2010; Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Ozaki & Hornak, 2014; Yaun et al., 2018).

As research on the benefits of collaboration continues to be revealed, collaborative efforts across institutions of higher education continue to rise (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). Increased use of collaborative programming on college campuses thus influenced this inquiry. The purpose of this study was to understand how faculty and student affairs educators make meaning of their collaborations on campus. More specifically, this inquiry examined the meaning of the term collaboration, what constitutes a successful collaboration, and how collaborations play out for these academic and student affairs educators in their current experiences. Additionally, the study

examined benefits and drawbacks of academic and student affairs collaboration on a college campus. The overarching research question guiding this inquiry was:

- Q1     How do academic and student affairs educators make meaning of their collaboration on campus?

### **Significance of Study**

Significance of this inquiry lies in gaining a richer understanding of professional relationships between faculty and student affairs educators, especially as partnerships on college and university campuses increase (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). Within higher education, faculty and student affairs educators are key contributors to knowledge production as increased student learning and development occurs both in and out of the classroom environment (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000). Consequently, comprehensive learning environments must be created across college campuses to ensure enhancement of learning and the college experience.

When academic and student affairs educators work collaboratively and practice shared responsibility, educational effectiveness increases by creating more comprehensive learning environments for college students (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh et al., 2005; Pearson & Bowman, 2000). Moreover, utilization of shared responsibility across organizational units is effective in increasing student success (Kuh et al., 2005; Whitt, Elkins Nesheim, Guentzel, Kellogg, McDonald, & Wells, 2008). Reflecting on such findings, it is imperative that academic and student affairs educators continue to connect with each other to help create more holistic learning environments which have been shown to enhance student learning, growth, development, and the college experience (Patton et al., 2016). Additionally, as collaboration increases on college campuses (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016), the focus is now on

developing and sustaining academic and student affairs partnerships (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). Therefore, gaining a deeper understanding of partnerships and collaborations on a college campus provides faculty, student affairs educators, and senior administrators greater insight on the development and sustainability of such endeavors.

### **Researcher Stance**

Previous experience in academic affairs as an educator drove my interest in this inquiry. Over a 10 year period, I was isolated in an academic silo as an instructor, causing me to develop a narrow view of higher education. I was completely uninformed of the roles and responsibilities of student affairs educators. During my employment in higher education, I was not involved with collaborative programming nor with student affairs educators. Instead, I focused on my academic program, demands of fulfilling teaching, research, and service requirements of the college, and pursuit of a terminal degree. Consequently, my early higher educational experiences were isolated and compartmentalized.

### **Academic Background**

My interest in teaching began while studying to become a Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC) at a small state college in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. While enrolled, I had the opportunity to serve as a Teaching Assistant (TA) for an athletic injury evaluation course and was immediately drawn to the art of teaching. In addition to serving as a TA and instructing in a formal classroom environment, I spent countless hours teaching students outside of the classroom. Athletic Trainers are responsible for student athletes' health care, so I taught aspects of injury prevention, treatment, and

rehabilitation. Completely inspired by student interactions and the experience of teaching, I was confident I wanted to pursue a career in education, specifically in the area of athletic training.

Upon completion of my athletic training certification, I was planning to apply for an open teaching position at the college. I was informed I would not qualify because I did not hold the minimum requirement of a master's degree. Knowing I wanted a career in education, and a master's degree was required to do so, I began applying to graduate programs. Honored to be accepted into a program in the southwest, I continued to work as an ATC at a local high school, while completing a master's degree in Sports Health Care. Graduating two years later, I returned to the Rocky Mountain region, still practicing as an ATC and still in search of a teaching position. Although aware of the difficulties of obtaining a position within higher education, I continued to apply in the hope of one day fulfilling my dream of being an educator.

### **Academic Experience**

Approximately three years later, I was approached by a close friend who was the Head Athletic Trainer where I previously studied. Over the years, he had become my mentor and was fully aware of my love for education and desire to teach. At the time, he moved on from his previous position and was now an assistant professor in an Athletic Training Education Program (ATEP) at another state college in the Rocky Mountains. At his institution of employment, a colleague in the ATEP had fallen ill and a replacement was sought. Knowing my desire to teach in higher education, my mentor approached me regarding the position and I jumped at the chance. Although I started at the college as an

emergency hire, I quickly proved my abilities and was hired the following year as a tenure-track faculty member.

Tenure-track faculty are commonly evaluated in the areas of teaching, research, and service, creating a variety of challenges to neophyte faculty members (Pearson & Bowman, 2000). Upon my hire, I was teaching a full-load of classes (i.e., 12 credit hours per semester), while also serving as a clinical instructor in the ATEP. Whereas the teaching demands were overwhelming, so were demands of fulfilling research and service requirements for the college. Additionally, I felt pressure to enroll in a doctoral program, being advised a terminal degree was required for promotion within higher education. Consequently, the majority of my time was spent concentrating on academics.

My role as an instructor required spending much of my time focused on my own academic responsibilities. However, I knew there was much to learn regarding the functions, operations, and complexities within higher education. Recognizing a strong desire for a career working with students in higher education, I subsequently chose a Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership (HESAL) program, as opposed to athletic training as field of study, to pursue a terminal degree.

Prior to enrollment in the HESAL program, I had limited interactions with student affairs educators, making me unaware of their contributions to student learning. Much of this limited interaction was the result of tunnel-vision approaches to academic responsibilities. Due to academic demands, I operated within an academic silo as a practicing instructor, thus limiting my professional interactions across campus. However, after studying with both HESAL faculty and peers, many who were student affairs educators, I learned a great deal about student affairs. Consequently, increased

understanding inspired me to examine the working relationships of academic and student affairs educators on college campuses, as my experiences were associated with strong feelings of disconnection between these two key organizational units. Hence, as my prior professional experience became the impetus for this study, my intent was to increase my understanding of relationships between academic and student affairs educators within the context of higher education.

### **Exposure to Student Affairs**

Studying within the HESAL doctoral program has been an eye-opening experience. At the completion of my coursework, I ended up learning much about student affairs, but my early experiences in the program were uncomfortable. The HESAL Ph.D. program is designed around the use of student cohort models. Student cohort models of education aim to increase knowledge production by sharing ideas and experiences of cohort members and are commonly used in student affairs educational programs (Carpenter et al., 1999). While I appreciate the conceptual idea of cohorts, I felt completely isolated from my particular group. Within the cohort of which I was one of nine students, I was the only faculty member. The majority of my classmates were student affairs educators who had previous personal and professional relationships with each other. As such, I dealt with feelings of separateness and isolation from the group.

Study in the HESAL Ph.D. program presented me with several challenges. Initially, while sharing professional experiences, most of my classmates discussed negative feelings and experiences with faculty at their respective institutions. As a faculty member, I found this offensive because unfair generalizations were being drawn, further contributing to my feelings of separation from the group. Interestingly, just as I felt

uninformed about student affairs, I felt my classmates were equally uninformed of the academic pressures and responsibilities of faculty. At this point, I felt no connection with my HESAL peers, forcing me to question my continuation in the program. However, after some personal reflection and awareness of my desire for a career in higher education, I was determined to finish this terminal degree. As a result, I remained in the program and have grown in ways I never imagined.

Over time and lengthy discussions in and out of the classroom, I realized that despite professional separations, my HESAL peers and I were connected by a common goal of improving student learning, student success, and the college experience. As such, my initial personal feelings of disconnection and separation began to diminish. Over time, I realized how student-focused I am as an educator. While some faculty focus on the attainment of tenure, my focus was always more on teaching and helping students learn. Maintaining an open-door policy as an instructor, my primary focus was, and still is, helping students succeed. Coming to such realizations, I wanted to explore student affairs in greater depth as I began to contemplate a change of career.

Fortunately, through the HESAL Ph.D. program, I completed a field experience course observing and assisting in the Office of Student Life at a local community college. The experience was enlightening on a variety of levels. Initially, I learned about functions and operations of a student life office. Amazing programs and efforts are made to assist students in ways I had never considered previously as a faculty member. Next, I assisted in writing a self-assessment document for the Office of Student Life required for an upcoming institutional reaccreditation. Participating in this project further increased my understanding of the roles and responsibilities associated with this particular aspect of

student affairs and higher education. Lastly, assisting with programming during the semester allowed me to work closely with students. Due to my strong student focus, this aspect of the field experience was most rewarding. The experience was so fulfilling that it inspired me to transition out of academics and enter the student affairs realm of higher education.

### **Attempting the Transition**

Entering the job market in search of a student affairs position within higher education has proven to be more difficult than initially imagined. Possessing over 10 years' experience working with students in higher education, I was confident I would find a position relatively quickly. Recognizing my experience was strictly related to an academic program, I worked with students nonetheless and believed that was enough to make the transition to student affairs practice. Sadly, I was mistaken. My job search, disappointingly, has not been as straight forward as I anticipated, leaving me to consider further personal feelings of disconnection between academic and student affairs educators.

Teaching within an ATEP requires a great deal of instructor/student interaction. ATEP teaching responsibilities encompass didactic, as well as, clinical education, thus requiring large time commitments with students. Additionally, much of my time was spent advising students with their major and future job possibilities, as well as, personal issues. Upon reflection, continual interactions such as these contributed greatly to my student-focused philosophy as an educator. Hence, as I attempt to transition into student affairs, I have applied for positions in advising, student life, and campus recreation,



believing such positions best match my previous skill set. Unfortunately, through the course of my ongoing job search, I have applied, and been rejected, for numerous student affairs positions thus far.

Many of the rejections I received occurred early in the search process during Human Resource office screenings. Most correspondences stated I do not meet minimum requirements. I must question, however, how a status of All But Dissertation (ABD) in a HESAL doctoral program does not qualify as meeting a minimum requirement of a bachelor's degree in education. Additionally, I have been told that I do not have "any experience." Again, I must question how over 10 years of experience as a committed faculty member does not translate to student affairs practice. Whereas I understand my current student affairs experience is limited, my experience working with students is not, yet I am turned away. Consequently, my frustration regarding noticeable disconnections between academic and student affairs educators influenced my position as a researcher undertaking this inquiry. However, while some of my personal feelings of disconnection remain, some have diminished after engaging in this inquiry.

### **Chapter Summary**

Within the context of higher education, both academic and student affairs educators contribute to student learning and success (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009). Creating comprehensive and holistic learning environments for college students thus calls for greater collaborations between these organizational units (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000). Academic and student affairs partnerships such as first-year experience programs, learning communities, faculty in-residence programs, and the creation of seamless learning environments are

linked to positive learning environments, increased student engagement, and increased institutional effectiveness (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Gulley & Mullendore, 2014; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh et al., 2005; Whitt, 2011). However, while benefits of these collaborations are evident, barriers continue to impede such efforts and contribute to professional disconnections observed within academic organizations (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pace et al., 2006; Philpott & Strange, 2003).

Organizational structure and perspectives of bureaucracies are evident within higher education (Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, & Dorman, 2013; Manning, 2013). Such structures, however, create barriers to the formation and implementation of academic and student affairs collaborations. Considering bureaucratic designs utilize a hierarchical order for communication and decision making, vertical lines of communication are established, limiting the flow of information through the organization (Birnbaum, 1988; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Manning, 2013). Resulting is the creation of fragmented, separated, and isolated (i.e., siloed) units within the institution (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pace et al., 2006). Further contributing to silo effects are professional differences (e.g., working structures, responsibilities, reward structures) between academic and student affairs educators (Crafts et al., 2001; Kezar, 2001a; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Philpott & Strange, 2003). Such barriers contribute to disconnections between academic and student affairs educators (Pace et al., 2006), and impede holistic and comprehensive learning.

Given the importance of academic and student affairs collaborations to student success, this inquiry was aimed at gaining a better understanding of what it means to collaborate in college and university settings. The purpose of this study was to understand how faculty and student affairs educators make meaning of their collaborations on

campus. This inquiry also examined the meaning of the term collaboration, what constitutes a successful collaboration, and how collaborations play out for these academic and student affairs educators in their current experiences. Lastly, the study examined benefits and drawbacks of academic and student affairs collaboration. Gaining such insight can help faculty, student affairs educators, and senior university leaders develop and sustain academic and student affairs partnerships across campus.

Also guiding this inquiry was my passion to help college students succeed. I began my career in higher education as a faculty member and am currently transitioning to student affairs practice. Because I am a student-centered educator, I chose to pursue a terminal degree in Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership (HESAL) to begin my transition. Whereas beginning in the HESAL program was uncomfortable, I became educated and enlightened on aspects within higher education of which I was previously unaware. Gaining understanding of student affairs educators' roles and responsibilities across campus stimulated my interest within this organizational unit and motivated my desired career change.

Attempting a transition from academics to student affairs has been more challenging than anticipated. Initially, I thought the change would be smooth as I have spent over 10 years working with college students. I was, however, mistaken. Through the process of my job search, I have been told that I do not meet minimum qualifications and do not have enough experience. While I understand I am new to student affairs practice and my experience in that area is currently limited, I have spent over 10 years educating college students. Frustratingly, my previous experience does not seem to

translate to student affairs. As a result, personally experiencing disconnections between academic and student affairs organizational units inspired me to conduct this inquiry.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The focus of this inquiry was to better understand how faculty and student affairs educators make meaning of their collaborations on a college campus. To examine their experiences, a variety of areas influencing partnerships and collaborations within higher education were explored and examined through review of current discourse. Subsequently, the following literature review addresses organizational structure (e.g., Birnbaum, 1988; Manning, 2013; Manning et al., 2014), organizational culture and climate (e.g., Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Kuk, Banning, & Amey, 2010; Manning, 2013), leadership (e.g., Birnbaum, 1988; Burns, 1978; Manning, 2013), and academic/student affairs collaborations currently found within higher education (e.g., Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016; Patton et al., 2016; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Whitt, 2011). Academic and student affairs collaborations are also referred to as curricular and co-curricular collaborations, and such terminology was used interchangeably through this inquiry.

Gaining understanding of processes and roles within higher education begins with exploring various perspectives related to organizational structures/models common to academia. The term *organization* refers to a complex entity existing within a larger environment (Kuk, et al., 2010). Organizations are organized units comprised of individuals addressing specific missions and goals and, they can be viewed from various

perspectives (Kuk, et al., 2010). Organizational structure within higher education contains complex perspectives and differs in its' characteristics from organizational structures commonly found within corporations, non-profits, and political institutions (Kuk, et al., 2010; Manning, 2013). Characteristics common to higher education include: highly professional employees, presence of cosmopolitans, multiple organizational structures, conflict over the appropriate product of higher education, goal ambiguity, client-focused missions, multiple and often-conflicting roles, and environmental vulnerability (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Kuk, et al., 2010; Manning, 2013). Each characteristic is discussed through this chapter, along with basic tenants of organizational structures common to higher education. Specifically, the organizational structures/models of organized anarchies, collegial, bureaucratic, and political models are examined and discussed in greater depth.

It is also helpful to recognize various components associated with organizational/campus culture and climate when attempting to understand academic organizations. Organizational culture is concerned with values and beliefs set forth in the organization, while climate is associated with members' perceptions of organizational life (Austin, 1994). Factors influencing culture are widespread and include values of both the institution and its' members, along with institutional history, tradition, rituals, and language (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991; Manning, 2000, 2013). Culture also "plays a major role in defining patterns of perceiving, thinking, and feeling about the nature and scope of education" (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p. ix) and thus parallels existing organizational structures/models. Correspondingly, campus climate influences student and faculty satisfaction and retention (Bender, 2009;

Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, & Han, 2009). Since culture and climate can potentially influence formation and development of partnerships across campus, both aspects are addressed in greater detail.

Since the focus of this inquiry was on professional collaborations, leadership styles are also examined as they can influence relationship building through an organization (Allen & Cherrey, 2000; Hui-Chao, 2002; Slantcheva-Durst, 2014). Challenges faced by leaders in higher education are addressed, along with leadership styles corresponding to organizational structures. Specifically, leadership styles associated with collegial, bureaucratic, and political organizational structures are considered. Additionally, participatory styles of leadership such as transformational and systemic leadership are examined.

Lastly, because the emphasis of this inquiry was on collaboration utilized in higher education, faculty and student affairs professional roles, responsibilities, and collaborative efforts are explored. Differences between these educators, including working and reward structures, are considered, while collaborative efforts are similarly discussed. Specifically, collaborative programming such as first-year programming, learning communities, and faculty-in-residence programs are examined. Also reviewed are barriers to collaborations (e.g., structural and professional barriers), along with suggestions of overcoming these hindrances.

### **Organizational Structure**

The organizational perspectives used to understand higher education institutions are, on several levels, an individual choice given the institutional context. The perspectives are expressed differently across the various departments and offices, and their prevalence ebbs and flows depending on the task at hand. This is only one of the many reasons why colleges and universities as organizations are complex and difficult to understand. (Manning, 2013, p. 7)

Institutions of higher education are complicated organizations operating under various organizational theories and structures (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Kuk, et al., 2010; Manning, 2013). Since collaboration between faculty and student affairs educators on a college campus was the focus of this inquiry, increased understanding of organizational structure is warranted to understand the unique organizational complexities and subsequent relationship building that exists within higher education.

Due to unique characteristics, organizational structures within higher education differ from organizational structures common to corporations (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Kuk, et al., 2010; Manning, 2013). The first characteristic unique to higher education is highly professional employees/staff. Within academic organizations, faculty, administrators, and student affairs educators possess expert knowledge within their respective disciplines and subsequently seek more autonomy in their professional practice. Consequently, higher education professionals encounter greater conflict with more formalized processes common within corporate organizations (Hendrickson et al., 2013).

A second characteristic distinctive to higher education is the presence of cosmopolitans within the organization (Manning, 2013). The term ‘cosmopolitan’ refers to faculty whose loyalty resides with their discipline and specific professional association rather than their institution of employment. In such cases, cosmopolitans pay more attention to their personal goals (e.g., discipline, research, professional association) than to circumstances at their institution, leading to divided loyalties among faculty within higher education (Manning, 2013).



Also common to higher education is the simultaneous occurrence of a variety of organizational structures/models, referred to as “multiple organizational structures” (Manning, 2013, p. 8). Higher education commonly operates under the auspices of various organizational perspectives at the same time. In other words, a collegium can exist along with a bureaucracy and/or a political model of organization, even though they operate under different perspectives. Additionally, various models of student affairs practice are applied within higher education, contributing to the complexity of higher education organizations compared with corporations (Birnbaum, 1988; Kuk, et al., 2010; Manning, 2013). These, along with other organizational models, are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

The terms “goal ambiguity” (Hendrickson et al., 2013, p. 31) and “conflict over the appropriate product of higher education” (Manning, 2013, p. 8), address another unique characteristic belonging to academic organizations. To summarize, goals associated with higher education are more ambiguous than goals associated with corporations (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013). While corporations tend to have a specific mission and outcome, higher education organizations struggle to define what their outcomes are because these outcomes are so widespread. Such outcomes may include graduation rates, student-faculty ratios, research contributions, and/or services to the local community, state, or nation (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013). Due to a variety of stakeholders (i.e., individuals invested in the organization) found within higher education, the overall goals of the organization become unclear and ambiguous as compared to those of a corporation (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013).

Some of the stakeholders academic organizations are charged to serve include “students, governments, foundations, businesses, and local community organizations” (Hendrickson et al., 2013, p. 32). As such, a “client focused mission” (Hendrickson et al., 2013, p. 32) is an additional characteristic common to academia. Due to the responsibility of serving a variety of stakeholders, each with their own wants and needs, organizations of higher education can be pulled in many directions trying to achieve desired outcomes. Consequently, as compared to corporations, organizations of higher education are more complex in their operation (Hendrickson et al., 2013).

Similarly, Manning (2013) describes the occurrence of “multiple, often-conflicting roles” (p. 8) found within academic organizations. Within the context of higher education, administrators, staff, faculty, students, and other potential stakeholders have varying responsibilities on campus. Subsequently, these professionals perform different, sometimes conflicting, roles at the institution (Manning, 2013). Accordingly, as expectations of stakeholders including students, parents, and legislators continue to increase, such professional conflicts within academia also continue to mount (Manning, 2013).

Finally, environmental vulnerability (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013) is another characteristic differentiating organizational structures of higher education from corporations. Compared to corporations, colleges are generally more vulnerable to environmental and external pressures (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013). Common examples of external pressures prevalent in academic organizations include, but are not limited to, state funding, private funding (i.e., donors), varying student needs (e.g., traditional vs. non-traditional students), and community responsibilities

(Hendrickson et al., 2013). Moreover, institutions more dependent on external resources likely manage their organization to adhere to those environmental pressures. However, utilizing such management, autonomy within the organization becomes limited.

Described by Riley and Baldrige (1977):

When professional organizations are well insulated from the pressures of the outside environment, then professional values, norms, and work definitions play a dominant role in shaping the character of the organization. On the other hand, when strong external pressure is applied to colleges and universities, the operating autonomy of the academic professionals is seriously reduced. (p. 6)

Likewise, as institutions strive to meet external pressures and demands, the institutions' work becomes defined, confined, and limited (Hendrickson et al., 2013).

Higher education as an organization is multi-layered and complex, particularly as compared to organizational models common to corporations. Because varying organizational structures/models exist, and are commonly used simultaneously in academia (Birnbaum, 1988; Kuk, et al., 2010; Manning, 2013), each model warrants further discussion. As such, the structures and perspectives of organized anarchy, collegial, bureaucratic, and political models are examined due to their widespread prevalence in organizations of higher education (Birnbaum, 1988). Keeping in mind that higher education is a complex system operating under several perspectives at the same time, "no one perspective or model will explain all aspects of higher education" (Manning, 2013, p. 7). Hence, when considering organizational structure, academic and student affairs educators are encouraged to think more holistically about various perspectives affecting their institutions. Doing so allows educators to analyze situations through a variety of lenses, helping develop solutions to issues common on college campuses.

## **Organized Anarchies**

Perspectives associated with organized anarchies are common in organizations of higher education and are present, at least some of the time, in any organization (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972). Theorized and described by Cohen and March (1986);

The American college or university is a prototypic organized anarchy. It does not know what it is doing. Its goals are either vague or in dispute. Its technology is familiar but not understood. Its major participants wander in and out of the organization. These factors do not make a university a bad organization or a disorganized one; but they do make it a problem to describe, understand, and lead. (p. 3)

A confusing perspective, organized anarchies are simultaneously organized and chaotic. Institutional processes, rules, regulations, and roles constitute the organized aspect of the model. On the other hand, anarchy, and its' associated chaos, describes the other part of this organizational perspective. Anarchy, in the sense of chaos, results from the variety of subgroups operating within the organization. Subgroups found within higher education include, but are not limited to, faculty, administrators, student affairs educators, students, internal stakeholders (i.e., trustees) and external stakeholders (i.e., legislators).

Generally, an organized anarchy is a “system where everyone does what they wish” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 153). Within this organizational structure and perspective, each subgroup assumes their own view, creating multiple realities within the organization (Manning, 2013). For example, faculty view the organization from their perspective, while students, administrators, and other stakeholders view the organization from their specific points of view. As a result, “no one person, regardless of power or position, fully understands the many realities and perceptions present in the organization, a situation that introduces uncertainty into the organizational structure” (Manning, 2013, p. 14).

Further contributing to the chaos, organized anarchies allow decisions to be made at various levels within the organization. Consequently, models of organized anarchy involve decision making based on choices that will change meaning over time (Birnbaum, 1988; Cohen et al., 1972). Because decision making becomes “an opportunity to make choices” (Manning, 2013, p. 25), it is messy and thus referred to as a garbage can (Cohen et al., 1972; Hendrickson et al., 2013). Hendrickson et al. (2013) frame it as,

decision making in academic organizations can be construed as a set of problems, solutions, and participants who move from one decision-making opportunity to another. The outcome of a decision is influenced by the availability of solutions, the people involved in the process, and the nature of the process. (p. 49)

Consequently, decision making within this model is dynamic and fluid, adding to the complexity of operating in an organized anarchy.

Decision making within the garbage can model is designed to allow organizational members avenues to pursue various “options within organizations” (Manning, 2013, p. 26). Explained by Cohen et al. (1972):

The garbage can process is one in which problems, solutions, and participants move from one choice opportunity to another in such a way that the nature of the choice, the time it takes, and the problems it solves all depend on a relatively complicated intermeshing of elements. These include the mix of choices available at any one time, the mix of problems that have access to the organization, the mix of solutions looking for problems, and the outside demands on the decision makers. (p. 16)

In short, decisions do not seek a well-defined, correct answer. Instead, “decisions are more about the ways that problems, solutions, choice opportunities, and decision makers come together at any point in time” (Manning, 2013, p. 26). Thus, a garbage can model of decision making accounts for influences of both people and circumstances to the available choices and subsequent decisions (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013).

Fittingly, decision making within the garbage can model is “a complicated dance to align problems, solutions, and decision makers to allow action to occur” (Hendrickson et al., 2013, p. 49).

On the whole, organized anarchies are characterized by three properties: 1) problematic goals or preferences, 2) unclear technology, and 3) fluid participation (Birnbaum, 1988; Baldrige, Curtis, Ecker, & Riley, 1978; Cohen et al., 1972; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013). First, problematic goals/preferences refer to ambiguity around goals associated with academia (Birnbaum, 1988; Cohen et al., 1972). Second, unclear technology refers to confusion around organizational outputs and the required technologies to produce such outputs (Birnbaum, 1988; Manning, 2013). Finally, fluid participation refers to the variation of organizational members’ involvement in the organization (Cohen et al., 1972; Manning, 2013).

Problematic goals/preferences refer to vagueness of organizational goals common to higher education. Because many groups (e.g., departments, committees) exist within higher education, the organization as a whole operates on a variety of preferences (Birnbaum, 1988; Cohen et al., 1972). Goals, therefore, become “a loose collection of changing ideas rather than a coherent educational philosophy” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 155). In higher education, faculty may be committed to goals that other stakeholders (e.g., trustees) may not consider important to the institution. Such goal ambiguity can create conflict within the organization because it causes the basic mission to be “so unclearly defined” (Manning, 2013, p. 15).

Furthermore, as academic institutions commonly focus on teaching, research, and service, additional arguments and corresponding ambiguity arise over “whether or not

teaching and research are mutually exclusive; how central service should be to faculty life; and whether teaching assistants, adjunct professors, or full-time faculty should bear primary responsibility for the teaching mission” (Manning, 2013, p. 14-15).

Consequently, while ambiguous goals are common to higher education, their presence creates confusion regarding organizational outcomes, technology, and subsequent decision making within the organization (Birnbaum, 1988). Stated otherwise, if organizational goals are unclear, how can we know what is effective regarding organizational outcomes and the means/technology to attain such outcomes?

Technology has been defined “as the characteristic processes through which organizations convert inputs to outputs” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 155). Stated simply, technology is the process of transforming entering students to college graduates. Within the context of higher education, technologies must meet the needs of the masses as “students learn differently; community members have diverse needs; and research requires a variety of methodologies and approaches” (Manning, 2013, p. 15).

Technologies are used by faculty, student affairs educators, and administrators and include lectures, discussions, laboratory or clinical work, seminars, independent study, remedial education, counseling, advising, and the creation of learning environments which support student success (Birnbaum, 1988; Kuk, et al., 2010; Manning, 2013).

While technologies such as these have been proven to be effective within higher education, questions regarding how and why they are effective is unclear (Birnbaum, 1988; Cohen et al., 1972). Important to bear in mind is that teaching is not an exact science and methods that work well for one student may not work for another. Consequently, choices regarding which technologies should be used are not based on

hard evidence, but rather on trial and error, as well as, previous experience (Birnbaum, 1988; Cohen et al., 1972). As a result, the presence of unclear technologies creates outside criticism as it is difficult to prove achievement of organizational goals (Manning, 2013).

The last property, fluid participation, suggests that involvement of the organizations' members varies in time (Cohen et al., 1972; Manning, 2013). Students, for example, are enrolled at an institution for a specific time period. Faculty, on the other hand, may or may not remain at an institution for their entire career. While some faculty tend to stay, others move on to multiple institutions in pursuit of career advancement. Additionally, administrators and other professional staff demonstrate similar fluidity within academic organizations as their time at any given institution can vary (Manning, 2013).

Fluid participation also refers to variances in time and energy that individuals spend on different issues (Cohen et al., 1972). Due to a multitude of professional responsibilities, higher education professionals “tend to move in and out of various parts of the organization, and their involvement in any issue depends to a great extent on what other opportunities for their attention happen to be available at the same time” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 156). Basically, members may be highly involved in one stage of a decision making process but less involved in later stages. Such fluidity can result in repeated mistakes and decisions being overturned. Thus, due to a lack of stable participation within an organized anarchy, decision making across the organization is complex and dynamic (Manning, 2013).



Associated with dynamic decision making, communication in an organized anarchy comes from a variety of directions and sources. Within academic organizations, multiple voices (e.g., students, faculty, student affairs educators, administrators) are represented. Consequently, “one can never predict or assess where communication will come from, what form it will take, and which aspects of that communication will be judged most valuable” (Manning, 2013, p. 16). Additionally, due to fluid participation, information moving through the organization may be incomplete or incorrect because the movement of organizational members can produce such discrepancies. Consequently, incomplete and multidirectional communication can lead to confusion about what can be accomplished in the organization (Manning, 2013).

While perspectives of organized anarchies are complex and differ from traditional top-down/hierarchal approaches found in other organizations, strength can be found in its organizational structure. For example, because of fluid participation, “pressure, power, and influence can be exerted at any point of the decision- or policy-making process” (Manning, 2013, p. 23), rather than in a top-down, hierarchal fashion. Additionally, a presence of multiple goals allows institutions of higher education to change directions “without fundamentally changing the college or university’s mission and purpose” (Manning, 2013, p. 23). Consequently, decisions previously put on hold can eventually come to fruition under the right circumstances. Importantly, while properties existing in academic organizations and organized anarchies contribute to organizational complexity, they also contribute to strengthening such organizations.

## **Collegial Models of Organization**

Intertwined in an organized anarchy, faculty tend to adhere to collegial models of organization, while administrators tend to operate under bureaucratic models (Manning, 2013; Manning et al., 2014). Collegial models of organization emphasize shared responsibility, shared power, and shared leadership. Members functioning within collegial organizations are treated equally and are not divided by status and/or hierarchal structures. Collegial organizational models seek to create “a community of colleagues” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 87) where decisions are made by consensus, thus creating a community of shared interests and equality. Members of collegial organizations have frequent interactions with each other in order to operate and make organizational decisions. Correspondingly, “people are more likely to interact when they are of equal status and less likely to interact as status differences between them increase” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 95), further supporting equality and collegiality within these organizational models.

Collegial models of organization originated in the early universities of 12<sup>th</sup>-century Europe with the beginning of the faculty tradition (Manning, 2013; Rosser, 2003). The faculty tradition began with the formation of teaching guilds and student nations. Each was an association consisting of faculty and students, respectively, who shared common interests, languages, and identities. Faculty within teaching guilds came together to form universities, while students within student nations were independent scholars seeking further instruction (Manning, 2013; Rosser, 2003). Eventually, “renowned faculty members from specialized disciplines began to attract large numbers

of students” (Rosser, 2003, p. 4). Characteristics from that era, still present today, include academic freedom, faculty control of curriculum, and peer review (Manning, 2013).

Structurally, collegial models of organization are flat, as opposed to, hierarchal in design. Flat organizational structures are participative in nature, allowing multiple voices to be heard through decision making processes. Thus, flat structures associated with collegiums facilitate greater involvement of members, particularly faculty, with institutional decision making (Manning, 2013). However, while flat organizational structures increase participation in decision making, they lack differentiated levels of authority. Consequently, decision-making within such models can be confusing, especially for those unfamiliar with the model (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013).

Faculty, generally considered experts in their respective fields, carry an element of expert power, a characteristic common to collegial models of organization (Manning, 2013). Within academic organizations, faculty gain promotion through three ranks; assistant, associate, and full professor (Manning, 2013; Pearson & Bowman, 2000). Faculty responsibilities include teaching, research, and service and are similar across all ranks. Additionally, within a flat collegial structure, no hierarchal divisions exist between faculty ranks, helping to increase interaction between faculty (Manning, 2013). However, since no power structures are in place within collegiums, “prestige among faculty in higher education institutions is based on disciplinary expertise” (Manning, 2013, p. 41). For instance, at certain institutions, faculty with strong reputations in research may possess more power than those who do not (Manning, 2013).

Expert power results from the expertise and professional knowledge of faculty. Because expertise and professional knowledge are valued in higher education, faculty are subsequently operating in positions of power. Consequently, faculty are insistent on exercising their power, particularly in regard to matters of curriculum. Faculty “believe that decision making in curricular and academic matters rests on a tradition of expert authority, authority that only faculty possess” (Manning, 2013, p. 41). Expert power enables faculty to challenge administrators and other decision makers in the institution.

Also common to collegiums is inclusivity through circular communication. Since collegiums utilize flat organizational designs, communication between members is more circular, as opposed to top-down approaches found in bureaucracies. Circular forms of communication allow all voices to be heard, but the process can be quite time consuming as it can contribute to over-analysis of topics (Manning, 2013). For example, in higher education “a seemingly inconsequential topic can gain substantial symbolic momentum during a faculty senate meeting” (Manning, 2013, p. 41). Moreover, concerning decision making, conversations within such models become long and drawn-out, and at times, result in no decision. Occurrences such as these lead to mounting frustrations, particularly for higher education administrators (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013).

While at times frustrating, researchers supporting collegiums and circular approaches to communication argue that, over time, the process is effective (Birnbaum, 1988; Manning, 2013). Decision making processes that are time consuming prevent senior administrators, some transient in nature, from making decisions that are potentially deleterious for the organization (Birnbaum, 1988; Manning, 2013). Additionally, communication processes common to collegiums “facilitates participative decision-

making at an institution-wide level” (Manning, 2013, p. 48) through engaging faculty in decision making, institutional planning, and policy making (Manning, 2013).

However, while attempting to be an organizational strength, circular communication can also be viewed as a weakness. The weakness is attributed to a belief that “decision making is a consequence of authority, and the collegial model is largely silent on the issue of which constituencies hold primacy over certain issues in the governance of colleges and universities” (Hendrickson et al., 2013, p. 44). Fluid participation also contributes to weaknesses associated with circular approaches of communication. For example, a majority of the time, faculty attendance at meetings is not mandatory. Consequently, due to other responsibilities, faculty may not attend all meetings through the academic year. As such, faculty present in earlier meetings may not be present in later meetings when final decisions are potentially being made. Occurrences like these can lead to continual rehashing of issues, lengthening the process and thus contributing to frustrations across the organization (Manning, 2013).

On the whole, strengths of collegiums include the creation of disciplinary communities, faculty autonomy, and faculty involvement with decision making across the institution. Weaknesses of collegiums, however, can include competition between peers in the same discipline, division between colleagues pursuing conflicting agendas, and frustrations with circular lines of communication (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013). Whereas faculty commonly operate under collegial modes, higher education administrators tend to follow perspectives associated with bureaucracies (Manning, 2013).

## **Bureaucratic Models of Organization**

While colleges and universities operate as organized anarchies and/or collegiums, bureaucratic elements also exist within the organization. Bureaucratic elements refer to formalized processes within the organization and are applicable to all members. For employees, processes involving daily operations and classifications such as title and rank are implemented. Concerning students, formalized processes around academic majors and subsequent degrees/certificates are followed (Manning, 2013). Accordingly, bureaucratic perspectives have been embedded within higher education for years.

Bureaucratic perspectives contend that organizations should operate under a hierarchal order with increased power at the top of the hierarchal pyramid (Birnbaum, 1988; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013). By design, such models operate on specific lines of authority and communication (Birnbaum, 1988; Manning, 2013). Additionally, “bureaucratic structures are established to efficiently relate organizational programs to the achievement of specified goals” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 107). Bureaucratic models therefore follow established vertical lines of authority and communication, both of which control the flow of information through the organization, to achieve specific institutional goals.

Abiding to vertical lines of decision making and power causes communication to move up the chain of command rather than across the organization in a horizontal or circular fashion. However, vertical movement of information limits the flow of information across the organization leading to decreased interpersonal interactions, sharing, and knowledge production (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Philpott & Strange, 2003). Differing from collegiums, administrators operating under bureaucratic perspectives

“rarely interact with lower level administrators” (Manning, 2013, p. 41). Consequently, bureaucratic structures “limit the flow of information to only the relevant group within the specific silos or areas of work” (Kezar & Lester, 2009, p. 30). Accordingly, institutional silos are created resulting in increased separation, isolation, and disconnection within higher education (Pace et al., 2006).

Another bureaucratic characteristic common to academia is the development and adherence to standard operating procedures (SOPs) (Manning, 2013). SOPs take their shape in the form of manuals and serve as a guide to daily operations and functions performed by faculty, student affairs educators, and administrators. Additionally, “elements of standard operating procedures are often codified in faculty and other union collective bargaining agreements. Hiring and firing procedures, timelines for tenure and promotion, and schedules for budgets are often strictly and legally maintained through SOPs” (Manning, 2013, p. 119). Thus, SOPs guide and dictate action within organizations and they are commonly utilized within institutions of higher education.

Due to a hierarchal design, bureaucracies follow a specific organization of labor. Organizational charts are commonly used to illustrate the division and specialization within the organization. Examination of these charts allows members of the organization to “determine the areas of responsibility for administrators within the organization. In fact, one could drill down through various division and departmental organizational charts to see the roles and responsibilities of nearly everyone within the institution” (Manning, 2013, p. 120). Specialization and division of labor also applies to faculty as academic disciplines are commonly further divided into sub-disciplines (i.e., English and

African American literature, respectively) (Manning, 2013). Consequently, specialization and divisions of labor common to academia contribute to its' bureaucratic complexity.

Similar to other models and perspectives, bureaucratic structures demonstrate a variety of strengths and weaknesses. Importantly, due to standardized processes, unethical behavior such as favoritism and nepotism can be minimized since fairness is obtained through impartiality and objectivity (Manning, 2013). Moreover, bureaucratic perspectives work well “in settings where routinization of task is needed to produce a standard outcome or product” (Manning, 2013, p. 122). Therefore, because higher education is such a complex organization, standardized processes common to bureaucracies can be advantageous.

While bureaucratic models have been, and still are, utilized in higher education, weaknesses are apparent. Weaknesses of bureaucratic perspectives include feelings of alienation by some employees, excess amounts of paperwork interfering with responsiveness, and the inability to adjust to rapid changes occurring with the context of higher education (Manning, 2013). Additionally, bureaucratic structures and perspectives focus more on “formal power and the hierarchal structures that define it than the informal power relationships that often exist in organizations and that often change over time depending on the issue or policy being debated” (Hendrickson et al., 2013, p. 43). In spite of such weaknesses, characteristics of bureaucratic structures are still widely adhered to in academia. However, contending that bureaucratic and collegial perspectives do not “adequately explain university administration or faculty life” (Manning, 2013, p. 67), political perspectives of higher education emerged in the early 1970s (Baldrige, 1971; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013).



### **Political Models of Organization**

Political models of organization view colleges and universities as political systems consisting of fluid and competing interest groups on campus (Baldrige, 1971; Hendrickson et al., 2013). Focal to these models is that relationships between organizational members serve as a guiding principle of the perspective. Within political models of organization, “coalitions form and dissolve, depending on the issue, task, or conflict; bedfellows are exchanged, subject to the goal; and conflict ebbs and flows with the passage of time and experience” (Manning, 2013, p. 69).

Interest groups common within higher education include both internal and external stakeholders. Examples of internal stakeholders include; faculty, student affairs educators, administrators, students, and alumni. Examples of external stakeholders include; legislators, government officials, community members, and neighbors. Whereas all of these groups are invested in the institution, their specific agendas and goals may be different. Subsequently, within political models of organization, varying interest groups attempt to exert their influence with decision making processes occurring on campus (Manning, 2013).

When groups rely on other groups or members for resources, issues of power and politics arise (Birnbaum, 1988). Political models of organization use “power to obtain preferred outcomes” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 132). As such, political organizational models are governed by the political power that groups within the organization possess. For example, if a particular department or group on campus brings money or prestige to an institution, that group most likely possesses more political power. Hence, that particular group will likely be considered more important and take precedence over other groups

within the institution. Accordingly, differing groups compete for power and resource allocation within political models, thus creating conflict within the organization (Birnbaum, 1988).

Power also increases with the formation of power elites in the political model. Power elites form when groups come together to increase power. More specifically, “when interest groups form among those at the top of the hierarchy (e.g., presidential cabinet members) or those with power (e.g., senior faculty), they become power elites” (Manning, 2013, p. 70). Even as power elites can be responsible for a number of decisions, they do not make all of the decisions regarding the direction of the institution. Concerning political perspectives of higher education, a number of groups (e.g., faculty, student affairs educators, trustees) influence decision making within the organization. For example, “faculty control the curriculum, the president and vice presidents make key budget decisions, and trustees approve or disapprove the strategic direction of the institution” (Manning, 2013, p. 70). Consequently, power elites exist simultaneously across college campuses.

Largely, institutions of higher education use different organizational perspectives, many times simultaneously, through their daily operations (Birnbaum, 1988; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013). Thus, understanding the basic tenants of common organizational models provides higher education professionals and administrators some insight to the complexity existing within higher education. While other organizational models exist, organized anarchies, collegiums, bureaucracies, and political models are most prevalent in higher education and student affairs practice and thus focused on for this inquiry.

## **Student Affairs Models of Practice**

Student affairs units/divisions focus on serving students. Such units provide services and programs designed to support academic success and student development while also supporting the mission of the institution (Kuk, et al., 2010). While student affairs units/divisions operate within, and are controlled by, the larger institutional organization, they have distinct cultures and organizational structures (Kuk, et al., 2010). Student affairs models of practice are generally unique to their institution, however, commonalities exist “from one educational institution to the next” (Kuk, et al., 2010, p. 10). Student affairs professional organizations put forth professional standards and ethics guiding student affairs practice. As such, common attributes found across institutions are reflective of these practices. Further, similar values and strategies used by student affairs educators “have shaped the design and practice of student affairs across the country to create organizations that are consistently similar in many ways” (Kuk, et al., 2010, p. 10).

While commonalities among student affairs practice exist, how these units/divisions operate is influenced by the culture, history, and unique needs of the institution in which they are housed (Kuk, et al., 2010; Manning, et al., 2014). For example, student affairs practice is more team-oriented and collaborative at liberal arts colleges compared to other types of colleges/universities (Hirt, Amelink, & Schneiter, 2004; Manning et al., 2014). Such an example demonstrates how student affairs units/divisions reflect larger institutional missions. Importantly, congruence between the student affairs and institutional mission is crucial. Per Manning, et al., (2014), “in order to be effective, student affairs divisions must fit the mission of the institution in which they are located” (p. 7).

Current literature discusses general models and guiding principles of student affairs practice (Kuk, et al., 2010; Manning, et al., 2014). Most recently, Manning, et al. (2014) discussed the organization of student affairs divisions in their book, *One Size Does Not Fit All: Traditional and Innovative Models of Student Affairs Practice (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. Considering student affairs models of practice, two overall categories (i.e., Traditional and Innovative) are identified. Models of practice within the traditional category are more reflective of “early priorities of the student affairs field” (Manning, et al., 2014, p. 4). These models generally focus on efforts outside of the classroom and “are often independently organized by student affairs professionals” (Manning, et al., 2014, p. 4). Consequently, such models maintain separation between academic and student affairs, causing these organizational units to operate as separate entities. Innovative student affairs models of practice, on the other hand, are more collaborative in nature. Concentrated on student learning and engagement, innovative models emphasize academic and student affairs educators working closely together and collaborating to achieve institutional goals (Manning et al., 2014).

Due to the nature of this inquiry, discussion of an innovative model known as Academic-Student Affairs Collaboration is considered. The academic-student affairs collaboration model assumes that both academic and student affairs educators place student learning and success at the center of their practice (Kuk, et al., 2010; Manning et al., 2014). Within this model, a “common purpose of enhanced student learning” (Manning et al., 2014, p. 158) is shared by academic and student affairs professionals. As such, these educators seek regular involvement and interaction with each other to enhance student learning and the college experience. While academic and student affairs

educators are experts in their respective fields, the goal of this specific innovative model is to blur the lines between these professionals and encourage shared responsibility for student learning and success (Manning, et al., 2014).

As the academic-student affairs collaboration model emphasizes shared responsibility toward a mutual goal of enhancing the student experience, the model contains various characteristics. Elements of this model include: student affairs educators are viewed as partners in learning, academic and student affairs educators work together with high levels of interaction, structural links (e.g., reporting lines) connecting academic and student affairs are created, and a common language concerning student learning and success is shared by these educators (Manning et al., 2014). Importantly, institutions utilizing collaborations and shared responsibility demonstrate increased levels of student learning, engagement, and success (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh et al., 2005; Manning et al., 2014; Pearson & Bowman, 2000) thus creating strength and support for the use of this model.

Academic and student affairs collaborations may also be useful from a financial standpoint. Working collaboratively can allow financial resources to be extended, particularly if both units are contributing to funding. As an example, funding a student service center with money from both academic and student affairs units allows the endeavor to be more affordable for each unit, while also strengthening their commitment to each other in the process (Manning et al., 2014). Subsequently, organizational models emphasizing collaboration can be cost effective for each unit (i.e., academic and student affairs), as well as the institution. While the academic-student affairs collaboration model demonstrates various strengths, challenges to these partnerships also exist.

One such challenge exists when academic and student affairs educators lack understanding of each other's roles concerning education (Kezar, 2017; Manning et al., 2014; Whitt, 2011). Subsequently, academic and student affairs educators may not view themselves equally in regard to student learning, thus creating lopsided or unfair collaborations (Manning et al., 2014). Accordingly, the knowledge, expertise, and educational talents of these professionals may not be utilized, thus diminishing the creation of holistic learning (Manning et al., 2014). Also considered a challenge, student affairs educators assume "a greater burden of the responsibility to partner with academic affairs" (Manning et al., 2014, p. 165) and are more likely to invite collaboration, rather than be invited to join such efforts. Regarding contributions to student learning, happenings like this potentially set the stage for inequality within a collaboration, again hindering holistic learning (Manning et al., 2014).

Overall, a variety of organizational structures and models existing within higher education influence the development and longevity of collaborative partnerships. Also influencing the occurrence and sustainability of collaborations are aspects of organizational culture and climate present within an institution. Elements of organizational culture and climate contribute to beliefs individuals have regarding their institution and therefore must be considered when contemplating the formation and sustainability of collaborations across college campuses.

### **Organizational Culture and Climate**

Organizational culture represents how members within an institution "create social reality through their interactions and interpretations" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 72). Organizational culture generally includes foundations of what individuals' believe (i.e.,

values), what individuals' do (i.e., behavior), and what guides individuals' actions (i.e., basic assumptions) (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Specifically, values are a predominant underpinning of organizational culture "because they guide behaviors and assumptions" (Kezar & Lester, 2009, p. 87) of the organization. Accordingly, organizational culture, driven by its' members' values, behaviors, and beliefs, steers organizational behavior (Birnbaum, 1988; Craig, 2004; Kuh & Hall, 1993; Masland, 1985). Moreover, organizational culture guides socialization of newcomers to the organization (Manning, 1993, 2013).

Similar to organizational structures, cultures in academia differ from those found in corporate organizations. Generally, values existing within academic cultures create the primary difference (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Corporate cultures, described as strong or weak, are described as foundations holding corporations together (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Manning, 2013). Strong corporate cultures dictate how members are to behave within the organization, while weak corporate cultures are more ambiguous. Within a corporate context, cultures in higher education are considered weak due to the presence of multiple values/goals and simultaneous use of various organizational perspectives (Manning, 2013). However, while considered weak in a corporate context, institutions of higher education "have stood the test of time and are among the most enduring organizations in history" (Manning, 2013, p. 93).

Within the context of higher education, a variety of cultures are "nested, embedded, and overlapped" (Manning, 2013, p. 95) within the organization. Cultures within higher education provide meaning for individuals and "instills in them an individual and collective sense of purpose and continuity" (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p.

9-10). Moreover, cultures identify things of importance to individuals working within that culture. While literature has primarily focused on faculty and administrative perspectives of organizational structure and culture, culture specific to student affairs divisions must also be considered as these units are unique components of the larger institution (Kuk et al., 2010).

Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) identify six cultures common to higher education in their book, *Engaging the Six Cultures of the Academy*. Importantly, these cultures are generally present simultaneously on campus. Like the concurrent presence of differing organizational structures/models within higher education, the same is true regarding culture. While faculty, student affairs educators, and administrators “tend to embrace or exemplify one of these six cultures, the other five cultures are always present and interact with the dominant culture” (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p. 7). Cultures described by Bergquist & Pawlak (2008), include the collegial, managerial, developmental, advocacy, virtual, and tangible cultures.

### **Organizational/Campus Culture**

Organizational/campus culture is influenced and established by a variety of factors. In some cases, though administrative leadership helps focus the direction of an institution, the organization’s cultural beliefs tend to “rest primarily in the value system of faculty” (Hendrickson et al., 2013, p. 34). These types of organizational/campus cultures are frequently influenced by faculty values and can be a function of relationships existing between faculty and administrators (Hendrickson et al., 2013). Cultures operating in this manner are known as collegial cultures.



Collegial cultures find meaning “primarily in the disciplines represented by the faculty in the institution” (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p. 15). Collegial cultures emphasize research and scholarship rather than teaching and community service. Subsequently, colleges dominated by this culture tend to be large, research oriented universities (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). Collegial cultures also encourage diverse perspectives but favor autonomy in practice (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). As such, collegial cultures reinforce separation and isolation noted within higher education as interdisciplinary collaboration is not emphasized. While autonomy is stressed in the collegial culture, other cultures noted within higher education have differing values. One such example is the managerial culture.

Managerial cultures find meaning in the organization rather than in faculty disciplines (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). Managerial cultures value fiscal responsibility, as well as effective supervision, and within this culture, “educational outcomes can be clearly specified and criteria for judging performance can be identified and employed” (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p. 44). Student learning is emphasized within managerial cultures as key components of the culture are efficiency and competence (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). As such, hierarchal organizational structures are commonly used to define roles, responsibilities, and desired outcomes. Moreover, colleges dominated by the managerial culture tend to be community colleges (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). Related closely to the managerial culture is the developmental culture.

The developmental culture is concerned with the “creation of programs and activities furthering the personal and professional growth of all members of the higher education community” (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p. 73). Like managerial cultures,

developmental cultures emphasize teaching and learning. Developmental cultures also emphasize personal and organizational growth (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). Furthermore, these cultures encourage collaboration, particularly regarding problems and subsequent solutions encountered by an institution (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008).

Similarly evolving out of the managerial culture is the advocacy culture. The advocacy culture focuses on the “establishment of equitable and egalitarian policies and procedures for the distribution of resources and benefits in the institution” (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p. 111). Like the managerial culture, the advocacy culture believes “anything involving educational programs and priorities is negotiable” (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p. 132), thus valuing fair bargaining. Currently within higher education, the managerial and advocacy cultures have grown stronger while the collegial culture is not as strong as it once was (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). The developmental culture, on the other hand, “remains marginal, though it potentially offers many solutions for today’s colleges and universities” (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p. 148). Additional cultures identified by Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) include the virtual and tangible cultures.

Virtual cultures focus on knowledge and its dissemination relative to our current post-modern world (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). Virtual cultures value global perspectives and believe in “broadening the global learning network” (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p. 147). Collaboration is emphasized in a virtual culture because current technology allows colleges and universities around the world to communicate easily with one another. As such, virtual cultures contribute to changing the face of higher education. Tangible cultures, on the other hand, find meaning in the roots of an institution (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008).

Tangible things such as a beautiful campus, esteemed faculty members, prestigious degrees, and large endowments are valued in this culture (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). Tangible cultures emphasize focusing on an institutions' roots to remain faithful to its mission (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). Correspondingly, institutional history, tradition, and symbols of the culture are valued (Kuh et al., 1991; Manning, 2013). Institutional history and tradition are reflected in the physical features and architecture of the campus, hence built into the campus culture (Manning, 2013). Architectural and design aspects such as physical space, location, accessibility and overall maintenance all communicate an institutions' character, as well as, demonstrate its commitment to students and community (Kuh et al., 1991; Manning, 2013).

Symbols of campus culture are assorted (e.g., academic regalia, campus artwork, athletic mascots) and can convey mixed messages regarding institutional values. For example, worn during ceremonies, academic regalia "could symbolize curricular excellence to faculty members, the achievement of a career goal for students, or elitism to a local community member" (Manning, 2013, p. 98). Likewise, athletic mascots may be considered part of the institution's tradition, but may be perceived as disrespectful by individuals on or around campus. Illustrations such as these demonstrate the multitude of values influencing campus cultures, thus contributing to complexity found in academic environments.

Rituals and ceremonies also influence campus cultures by creating meaning for students, faculty, student affairs educators, and administrators. Commonly used as an avenue for socialization of newcomers to the campus environment (Manning, 2000), rituals and ceremonies reinforce institutional values and ideals, helping newcomers make

meaning of the institutional structure (Moore & Myerhoff, 1977). Similarly, language, must be taught to newcomers through socialization processes (Manning, 2013).

Understanding “the jargon of a field, terms employed within a group, and expressions considered professional or appropriate distinguish membership and cultural belonging” (Manning, 2013, p. 97). Language use also dictates preferred protocols on campus as it sets the tone of the organization. For instance, the use of first names versus professional titles shapes the power of individuals across campus (Manning, 2013).

Overall, campus culture affects professional, as well as, student life on a college campus (Masland, 1985). Therefore, gaining a better understanding of campus culture provides higher education professionals insight to what is considered important to both learners and educators within the institution. Additionally, “understanding the culture of a particular institution may further explain campus management because culture appears to influence managerial style and decision practices” (Masland, 1985, p. 150). Accordingly, cultures provide insight to leadership styles prevalent within institutions of higher education.

### **Campus Climate**

Occurring frequently within the context of higher education, the term campus climate is used interchangeably with the term campus culture, making concrete delineations of campus climate hard to identify (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008). While organizational culture refers to the values and beliefs driving an organization, organizational climate refers to members’ “assessment, views, perceptions, and attitudes toward various aspects of organizational life” (Austin, 1994, p. 52). Stated otherwise, organizational climates reflect members’ perceptions of practices, procedures, and

occurrences in the organization, as well as, the meaning and significance of their working environment (Arnetz, Lucas, & Arnetz, 2011; Coda, da Silva, & Custodio, 2015).

Specific to organizations of higher education, climate is defined as “the current common patterns of important dimensions of organizational life or its members’ perceptions of and attitudes toward those dimensions” (Peterson & Spencer, 1990, p. 7). Similar to corporate descriptions, perceptions and attitudes are emphasized within campus climates while values and beliefs are emphasized within campus cultures.

Studies about campus climate focus on characteristics including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, religion, gender identity and other identities found on college campuses (Allan & Madden, 2006; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Jayakumar et al., 2009; Rankin & Reason, 2005). Experiences of students and faculty are the focus of these studies, particularly in regard to satisfaction and retention. Generally, findings of campus climate studies fluctuate as experiences are individualized and unique. For instance, “a Latina may experience campus climate quite differently than a White woman, who both have different experiences from a White man” (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008, p. 230). Furthermore, multiple levels of an individual’s identity add to the complexities surrounding campus climate. Therefore, trying to gain an understanding of campus climate requires discussion with as many members of the organization as possible to allow all voices to be represented.

Related to faculty, professional satisfaction and subsequent retention are associated with numerous factors influencing campus climate. Affecting faculty retention are matters including: salary, time constraints, gender, level of autonomy, sense of community, institutional leadership, distribution of resources, tenure status, and quality of

life (Jayakumar et al., 2009). Concerning student affairs educators, campus climate and subsequent professional satisfaction is affected by matters related to: salary, benefits, job security, involvement in decision making processes, institutional flexibility, and working conditions (Bender, 2009; Rosser, 2004). Just as campus cultures are important considerations for administrators, so are corresponding campus climates. Understanding an institutions' climate provides insight to important matters concerning students, faculty, and student affairs educators, helping campus leaders create satisfying, inclusive, and safe learning environments.

### **Leadership**

Leaders involved in academia must be ready and prepared to work within the organizational complexities of higher education. Considering elements of expert power and subsequent autonomy among members of the organization, leadership in academic organizations can be challenging (Hendrickson et al., 2013). Commonly, academic leaders are faced with the question of “how to maintain organizational control and direction without imposing undue influence on these embedded professional values” (Hendrickson et al., 2013, p. 47). Additional challenges faced by academic leaders are influences of stakeholders, both internal and external, to the institution. Because a variety of stakeholders exist throughout the organization, academic leaders must be able to “navigate effectively the ever increasing governance challenges facing today’s college and university decision makers” (Hendrickson et al., 2013, p. 47) as each subgroup has its’ own goals, agenda, and power dynamic.

Certain leadership styles frequently correspond with organizational perspectives (i.e., collegial, bureaucratic, political) (Manning, 2013). Within collegiums, leadership

styles are participatory in nature (Amey, 2006; Burkhardt, 2002; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Manning, 2013; van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry, & van Meurs, 2009; Whitt et al., 2008). Bureaucracies, however, favor top-down and authoritative leadership styles (Birnbaum, 1988; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013). Considering political perspectives, leadership is “defined by power structures and influence” (Manning, 2013, p. 5). Accordingly, academic leaders may adhere to leadership styles connected with specific organizational perspectives.

### **Collegial Leadership**

Collegial organizational models employ tenants of participatory, or shared, leadership (Amey, 2006; Burkhardt, 2002; Kezar & Lester, 2009; van Ameijde et al., 2009; Whitt et al., 2008). Suggested by its name, leaders practicing participatory/shared styles of leadership include others in the decision-making process (Arnold & Loughlin, 2013; Northouse, 2013; Slantcheva-Durst, 2014; Somech & Wenderow, 2006). Participatory/shared types of leadership consider opinions and ideas of members of the organization, integrating “their suggestions into the decisions about how the group or organization will proceed” (Northouse, 2013, p. 140). In doing so, this type of leadership style allows “innovation and ideas to emerge at multiple levels” (Kezar & Lester, 2009, p. 45) which encourages sharing knowledge across the organization. Participative/shared leadership is also shown to be an integral component of effective partnerships and collaborations (Slantcheva-Durst, 2014; Whitt et al., 2008).

The term “leadership as first among equals” (Manning, 2013, p. 42) is also used when describing leadership style common to a collegial perspective. Within collegiums, “the basic idea of the collegial leader is less to command than to listen, less to lead than

to gather expert judgements, less to manage than to facilitate, less to order than to persuade and negotiate” (Baldrige et al., 1978, p. 45). Leaders taking a first among equals role gain respect through working with others and creating compromise within the organization (Manning, 2013). Moreover, while power possessed by collegial leaders comes from their professional expertise, their success as a leader is based on their understanding of “faculty culture and processes” (Manning, 2013, p. 42). Thus, understanding the many organizational complexities existing within academia is paramount for leaders in higher education and student affairs practicing collegial leadership.

### **Bureaucratic Leadership**

Bureaucratic organizations are focused on achieving specific goals (Birnbaum, 1988). Correspondingly, leaders tend to align with “the preestablished organizational hierarchy for decision making” (Allan, Gordon, & Iverson, 2006, p. 43) to attain these goals. Hierarchal structures allocate more power and authority at the top of the hierarchal pyramid, with less power and authority at lower levels (Birnbaum, 1988; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013). Bureaucratic authority is sometimes referred to as formal authority and is “attached to the office or position held by the employee” (Manning, 2013, p. 117). Residing at the top of the hierarchal pyramid, positions possessing bureaucratic/formal authority in higher education include the president and provost.

In today’s world, higher education administrators are faced with increasing assessment and evaluation demands (van Ameijde et al., 2009). In order to meet specific goals, administrators may adhere to directive styles of leadership. Directive leadership provides a framework for organizational members to attain specific goals, as well as,



meet performance standards (Martin, Liao, & Campbell, 2013; Somech & Wenderow, 2006). Stated otherwise, directive leaders instruct their members on how to complete a task, expectations involved with completing the task, and timeline for completion (Northouse, 2013). Further, leaders following tenants of directive leadership “actively monitor performance and provide appropriate feedback” (Martin et al., 2013, p. 1374) to members in the organization. Doing so allows leaders to make sure that members’ performance is on track to meet specified goals, while also allowing leaders to address problems as needed (Martin et al., 2013).

While leaders using directive approaches guide organizational members toward the achievement of goals, they do not involve all organizational members in the decision making process (Northouse, 2013). Correspondingly, the nature of a bureaucratic and directive leader can limit interactions across the organization. Limited interactions across college campuses, however, are said to contribute to fragmentation and separation found within higher education (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pace et al., 2006). As such, institutions guided particularly by bureaucratic models of organization further exhibit these characteristics (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pace et al., 2006).

### **Political Leadership**

Leadership within a political organizational perspective is defined by power and influence (Manning, 2013). Decision making in political organizations is confusing and unorderedly as “political constraints can seriously undermine attempts to arrive at rational decisions” (Baldridge et al., 1978, p. 36). Rather than a guided step-by-step model, decision making in political organizations is diffuse and decentralized. Moreover,

decision making within these organizations typically involves conflict, compromise, and bargaining (Baldrige et al., 1978; Manning, 2013).

Common within political models is the notion of “spheres of influence” (Manning, 2013, p. 75). Stakeholders involved with higher education (i.e., students, faculty, administrators, alumni, parents) have specific areas which they can influence (Baldrige et al., 1978; Manning, 2013). For instance, faculty influence curriculum decisions while administrators are charged with financial decisions. Common to political organizations “is the practice that groups outside a particular sphere of influence refrain from participating in decisions in that area” (Manning, 2013, p. 75). Consequently, administrators avoid making curriculum decisions, while faculty avoid budget decisions (Manning, 2013).

Paramount to leadership in political organizations is the establishment and building of relationships (Manning, 2013). Interest groups come together to form coalitions and/or power elites. Lobbying to exert their influence, these groups use pressure and power to influence support for their cause (Baldrige et al., 1978; Manning, 2013). Thus, analogous to participatory/shared leadership, decision making is inclusive, as a variety of voices are considered through the decision-making process.

### **Participatory Leadership**

Leaders practicing participatory, or shared, styles of leadership involve members of the organization in decision making processes (Arnold & Loughlin, 2013; Northouse, 2013). These leaders seek input and ideas from organizational members regarding operation and progress of the organization (Arnold & Loughlin, 2013; Northouse, 2013). Participatory styles of leadership are suggested for institutions wishing to increase

collaborative efforts as such styles encourage sharing of knowledge at many levels throughout the organization (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

Participatory leadership is an important component of effective partnerships and leaders with this style likely support academic and student affairs collaborations more than directive leaders (Slantcheva-Durst, 2014; Whitt et al., 2008). Consequently, changes in institutional leadership to more participatory styles can lead to more collaborative efforts on campus. Some participatory styles of leadership which are inclusive and place value on organizational members include transformational and systemic leadership.

### **Transformational Leadership**

Originally introduced by Burns (1978), fundamental to transformational leadership are connections between leaders and other organizational members, who he referred to as followers. Focused on change, transformational leadership is “concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. It includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings” (Northouse, 2013, p. 185). While transformational leaders strive for change in an organization, “followers and leaders are inextricably bound together in the transformation process” (Northouse, 2013, p. 186). Within this style of leadership, transformational leaders are attentive to members’ needs while trying to help them succeed (Arnold & Loughlin, 2013; Burns, 1978; Northouse, 2013). By and large, the process of transformational leadership is one where “a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower” (Northouse, 2013, p. 186).

Bass (1985) expanded upon previous views relating to transformational leadership, arguing that transformational leaders motivate followers to exceed expectations. Transformational leaders accomplish this by raising awareness of the importance of the organizational goal, moving members (i.e., followers) to address high-level needs, and inspiring members to consider the greater good above themselves (Bass, 1985; Northouse, 2013). Transformational leaders also encourage members (i.e., followers) to think independently about problem solving. Importantly, these leaders listen to members' needs thus creating supportive environments resulting in "performance that goes well beyond what is expected" (Northouse, 2013, p. 193).

### **Systemic Leadership**

Transformational in nature, the purpose of systemic leadership is to move from a world of fragmentation to a networked, or more holistic world (Allen & Cherrey, 2000; Hui-Chao, 2002). Fragmented worldviews consider organizations by their parts, rather than as a whole. Networked worlds, on the other hand, take a "whole system perspective" (Allen & Cherrey, 2000, p. 8), contending that a system is "more than the sum of their parts" (Allen & Cherrey, 2000, p. 5). Systemic thinking considers "how different variables relate to and affect each other" (Allen & Cherrey, 2000, p. 8), thus seeking a holistic view of how the entire organization operates. Systemic thinking takes into account building relationships within the organization through professional collaborations.

Networked organizations view relationships as "sources of energy that sustain important efforts over time" (Allen & Cherrey, 2000, p. 31), thus emphasizing the importance of relationship building within the organization. Forming relationships and

collaborations creates new ways for people to relate and can ultimately affect change through development of trust (Allen & Cherrey, 2000). A systemic leadership style fosters increased trust and creates safe and inclusive environments for members to share their perspectives (Allen & Cherrey, 2000). As such, environments conducive to collaborations can be created. Notably, academic and student affairs collaborations have been shown to increase student success and are subsequently being implemented across college campuses (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh et al., 2005). Since this inquiry focused on meaning making related to these types of collaborations, information about academic and student affairs is discussed next.

### **Academic and Student Affairs**

While academic and student affairs educators share the same goal of increasing student learning, growth, and development (Patton et al., 2016), their responsibilities on campus differ. Generally, it is the responsibility of faculty to teach students within the classroom environment. Student affairs educators, on the other hand, teach students outside the classroom (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000). However, considering that academic and student affairs educators are linked by a common goal to improve student learning and the college experience, closer working relationships are recommended for the promotion of student learning and development (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Yaun et al., 2018).

Responsibilities of full-time faculty most often include teaching, conducting original research, and providing institutional and/or community service (Pearson & Bowman, 2000). Upon hire, it is common for faculty to enter the university at an assistant

professor rank. Faculty move through promotion and tenure in time periods set forth by the institution. Faculty are evaluated and assessed on their contributions to improving teaching methods and outcomes, conducting research with subsequent publications in their field of expertise, and providing institutional and/or community service in order to advance (Pearson & Bowman, 2000). It is worthy to note that institutional differences (e.g., liberal arts focused versus research-focused institutions) affect the weight placed on each category of the faculty assessment. Faculty members at liberal arts focused institutions more likely have greater emphasis placed on teaching and service responsibilities, whereas faculty at research-focused institutions may be evaluated more heavily on their research and subsequent publications (Hirt & Collins, 2004; Pearson & Bowman, 2000).

Demands of teaching, research, and service require a significant amount of time for faculty. The teaching aspect, in and of itself, necessitates that faculty spend a considerable amount of time outside of class to update curriculum, grade student work, and provide advising (Pearson & Bowman, 2000). Conducting research and publishing are also daunting tasks. Such endeavors usually necessitate extensive writing in an attempt to gain publication, along with potential grant writing and associated conference presentations (Pearson & Bowman, 2000), all demanding significant amounts of time to accomplish. Finally, time loads are further stretched for faculty considering requirements of involvement in institutional and/or community service (e.g., committee or task-force participation). Consequently, limited time and availability of faculty contributes to their potential hesitation to form collaborations with student affairs professionals on campus (Kezar, 2001a; Pearson & Bowman, 2000).

Responsibilities of student affairs educators occur primarily outside of the classroom environment. Student affairs educators focus specifically on personal development including developing students' voice, concept of self, and ability to think independently (Guarasci, 2001; Rodgers, 2009). Historically, establishment of student affairs practice "signaled a shift from institutions that were entirely focused on the mind of the student to an understanding of the social and psychological needs of the student" (Kezar & Lester, 2009, p. 32). Understanding such influences beyond academics subsequently enables additional support for college students through the formation of student affairs offices across campus (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Student affairs offices thusly provide services that support the development of students through their college experience (Manning et al., 2014).

Student affairs educators often have specific knowledge in student growth and development and are well versed in student development theories (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010; Feldman Barr, 2013). Theories regarding social identity, intellectual and psychosocial development, cognitive development, and ethics and morality guide student affairs practice as its overall focus is aimed at the holistic development of students (Evans et al., 2010; Feldman Barr, 2013). In addition to personal growth, student affairs educators are well versed in areas of safety and security, conflict resolution, and community participation and engagement (Feldman Barr, 2013). As such, student affairs educators commonly work in offices of student life, residential life, student orientation and admissions, advising, financial aid, conduct, and career services (Feldman Barr, 2013; Kezar & Lester, 2009).

## **Working Structures**

Working structures of academic and student affairs educators differ with faculty tending to work more independently as compared to student affairs professionals. Faculty isolation tends to be the result of prior academic training and experience (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Faculty commonly work independently on scholarship and become accustomed to working in that manner. Consequently, “after such a long time working alone, faculty are not likely to be inclined to work with others and have not learned the skills to work collaboratively” (Kezar & Lester, 2009, p. 27). Furthermore, faculty employed at research-focused institutions may be more isolated as greater emphasis is placed on research and publications, both of which are projects that faculty commonly tackle independently (Hirt & Collins, 2004; Kezar & Lester, 2009).

Student affairs educators, on the other hand, function interactively across campus, engaging in student service, student learning and development, committee participation, and strategic planning (Hirt & Collins, 2004). Preparing students to practice within student affairs, educational programs enroll groups of students, creating a cohort. These student cohorts are designed to emphasize sharing of ideas and experiences between members of the group to increase knowledge production (Carpenter et al., 1999). Within student affairs educational programs, cohort groups are utilized to “allow students to mimic the experience of blending personalities into a student affairs staff” (Carpenter et al., 1999, p. 18). The shared experiences become “a cornerstone, since students will have to work that way throughout their careers” (Carpenter et al., 1999, p. 18). As educational



training and work experience for student affairs educators encourages idea sharing, these professionals become more accustomed to collaborative work when compared with faculty.

### **Reward Structures**

Further contributing to differences between academic and student affairs are differing reward structures within each group (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009). Reward structures of promotion and tenure are set up for faculty based on the assessments of their scholarly contributions to teaching, research, and service (Pearson & Bowman, 2000). Faculty concentrate on these areas in the hope of attaining tenure and its associated job security. Consequently, faculty may be less willing to spend time outside of their academic area in fear of sacrificing necessary time required to attain tenure (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

In contrast, merit systems and subsequent promotions and/or salary increases constitute reward structures for student affairs educators (Carpenter, Torres, & Winston Jr., 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009). Similar to most administrative positions in higher education, student affairs educators are evaluated and subsequently rewarded on the quality of their work in regard to established responsibilities and goals (Carpenter et al., 2001; Davis, 2001; Hirt & Collins, 2004). However, although promotions and increased salaries are available to student affairs educators, tenure is not an option. Consequently, reward differences such as these influence the value system of each discipline, further contributing to differences between them.

### **Academic and Student Affairs Collaborations**

Gaps between academic and student affairs educators have been prevalent within higher education for years (Gulley & Mullendore, 2014; Hirsch & Burack, 2002; Whitt, 2011). Historically, it has been noted that “student affairs grew out of academic affairs” (Gulley & Mullendore, 2014, p. 661) because early institutions of higher education relied upon faculty to support students both academically and non-academically. However, as higher education evolved, specializations within academic organizations increased, leading to division within the academy (Gulley & Mullendore, 2014; Hirsch & Burack, 2002). Consequently, academic and student affairs became divided “with each functioning on either side of a widening chasm” (Hirsch & Burack, 2002, p. 53). Such division created gaps between academic and student affairs, also referred to as curricular and co-curricular, which are still in existence in today’s institutions of higher education.

Student learning occurs both in and out of the classroom environment (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001). Moreover, research indicates that student learning and success are increased as a result of academic and student affairs collaborations (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh et al., 2005). However, while collaborations are associated with improved student outcomes, division between academic and student affairs continues to endure. Reacting to such divisions, student affairs professional associations (i.e., College Student Educators International [ACPA] and Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education [NASPA]) began to focus on the importance of academic and student affairs collaborations (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Feldman Barr, 2013; Johnson & Rayman, 2007; Kezar, 2001a). As a result, a call to create more

comprehensive collaborative efforts for establishing holistic learning environments within higher education was issued (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Johnson & Rayman, 2007; Kezar, 2001a).

### **Development of Academic and Student Affairs Collaborations**

Intellectual climate and evolving conversations related to increased comprehensive collaborations came to fruition with documents such as the *Student Learning Imperative* (ACPA, 1994) and *Principles of Good Practice* (NASPA, 1997). Both documents stressed the importance of academic and student affairs partnerships in regard to creating a more holistic approach to increasing knowledge and enhancing student learning (Johnson & Rayman, 2007; Kezar, 2001a; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Rodgers, 2009). What followed was a changing conversation regarding academic and student affairs collaborations within higher education. Viewing student affairs professionals as more than service providers was a starting point for this conversation as emphasis was now placed on their role as educators with responsibilities for increasing student learning, growth, and development (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Carpenter et al., 1999; Johnson & Rayman, 2007; Pearson & Bowman, 2000).

As the conversation related to academic and student affairs educators evolved, *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning* (American Association for Higher Education [AAHE], ACPA, & NASPA, 1998) was published. Emphasis again was placed on contributions to student learning by student affairs professionals, thus calling for more comprehensive academic and student affairs collaborations within higher education (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Gulley & Mullendore, 2014). Written jointly by three organizations (AAHE, ACPA, and NASPA) the report stated, “only when everyone

on campus – particularly academic and student affairs staff – shares responsibility for student learning will we be able to make significant progress for improving it” (AAHE et al., 1998, p. 1). The holistic nature of learning was considered, emphasizing that learning takes place both inside and outside of a classroom environment, further supporting the role of student affairs professionals as educators (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Gulley & Mullendore, 2014).

Additional literature concerning the importance of academic and student affairs collaborations in regard to student learning continues to be highlighted, particularly by student affairs professional organizations. Issues of fragmentation and separation within higher education were specifically addressed in *Greater Expectations* (Association of American Colleges and Universities [AACU], 2002). The document emphasized that the responsibility of increasing student knowledge must be shared among all professionals within higher education, thus further supporting the role of student affairs practice and its contribution to educational outcomes (AACU, 2002; Johnson & Rayman, 2007). Later, NASPA published, *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus Wide Focus on the Student Experience* (NASPA & ACPA, 2004), which also supported the role of student affairs practice for enhanced student learning, growth, and development (Johnson & Rayman, 2007; NASPA & ACPA, 2004). These documents increased awareness of the importance of academic and student affairs collaborations, along with the need to implement such efforts across college campuses. Accordingly, more collaborative efforts between the curricular and co-curricular are practiced within higher education in order to enhance student learning.

## **Programming for Collaboration**

Supporting a more holistic approach to education, collaborative programming enhances student learning (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh et al., 2005; Yaun et al., 2018). As institutions aim to create more meaningful educational experiences, collaborative programming between academic and student affairs has been used to attain such outcomes (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Crafts et al., 2001; Feldman Barr, 2013; Gulley & Mullendore, 2014). Collaborative programming includes, but is not limited to, first-year experience programs, learning communities, faculty in-residence programs, and the creation of seamless learning environments (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016).

Intended to increase professional interactions, early collaborative programming involved the development of faculty in- residence programs (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Feldman Barr, 2013). Faculty in-residence programs focus on faculty and student affairs educators sharing ideas and working together on activity programming within residence life. Within these programs, faculty live among students and student affairs educators in campus residence halls (Gulley & Mullendore, 2014). Living within residence halls allows faculty to engage more fully with students and student affairs educators, in and out of a classroom environment. Increased interactions like these help build connections across campus, potentially lessening a sense of division. While faculty in-residence programs are examples of early collaborative efforts, they are still utilized at institutions of higher education, particularly with the implementation of academically themed housing (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Feldman Barr, 2013; Kezar, 2017).

Similarly, creations of learning communities across college campuses are also utilized to enhance student learning via interdisciplinary collaborations (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Guarasci, 2001; Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh et al., 2005). Within learning communities, students are intentionally grouped together by similarities in class schedules, course enrollment, and/or living environment. Intentional groupings such as these allow the same group of students to work together over time, thus encouraging out-of-classroom interaction and engagement (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). Further, described by Kuh et al. (2005):

Living and learning with other students and faculty creates a community based on shared intellectual experiences and leavened by social interactions outside of class. As a result, students often are more actively involved with the course material than if they simply attended classes. (p. 198)

More specifically, as collaborations occur within learning communities, students become engaged beyond the classroom, opening them up to more diverse perspectives and enhancing their production of knowledge (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh, 2008; Kuh et al., 2005).

First-year experience programs also promote academic and student affairs collaborations. Initially, first-year experience programs emerged either out of academic affairs or out of student affairs (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). Programs arising from academic affairs generally focused on content knowledge, as well as knowledge regarding students' psychosocial development during the first year of college (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). Programs arising from student affairs commonly did not count for academic credit and focused on areas of study skills, social involvement, and time management (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). More recently, colleges and

universities are encouraging academic and student affairs educators to partner in these endeavors in order to utilize each professionals' area of expertise (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016).

Within first-year experience programs, faculty and student affairs educators work together supporting first year and/or at-risk students (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kuh, 2008). Commonly, courses are team taught and combine goals of each individual model (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). For example, a faculty member and a student affairs educator may team teach a course encompassing elements of general education and majors, psychosocial development, life and study skills, and career exploration (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). Another example involves engaging faculty with the design and implementation of new student orientation processes. Collaborative programming like this allows academic and student affairs educators the opportunity to work more closely together, helping to bridge professional gaps. Other interdisciplinary programming in higher education occurs within areas of student life and/or advising (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001).

First-year experience programs and learning communities are considered high-impact practices. High-impact practices are educational practices “shown to have a significantly beneficial impact on student learning and success in college” (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017, p. 34). Such practices contribute to increased student engagement and retention and are used commonly across institutions of higher education (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Holcombe, 2017; Kuh, 2008; Kuh et al., 2005). Other high-impact practices include writing intensive courses, undergraduate research, collaborative assignments and projects, internships, community learning, service learning, diversity/global learning,

common intellectual experiences and capstone courses (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017; Kuh, 2008). Since high-impact practices have positive impacts on a student's college experience, university leaders are encouraged to support and promote collaborations encompassing such practices on campus (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017).

Focusing on creation of more holistic learning environments to enhance student learning, the concept of creating seamless learning environments must be considered (Crafts et al., 2001; Gulley & Mullendore, 2014). A common method of academic and student affairs collaborations, seamless learning is focused on connecting students' in and out of classroom experiences to enhance knowledge production (Crafts et al., 2001; Gulley & Mullendore, 2014). Connecting inside and outside classroom experiences thus calls for connections between academic and student affairs educators as they must work closely together coordinating curriculum (Gulley & Mullendore, 2014). These educators must also work together developing curricular and co-curricular learning objectives for such endeavors.

Relating to co-curricular learning outcomes, it is recommended that higher education administrators create and utilize more comprehensive student records (NASPA website, 2016). Utilizing more comprehensive records speaks to both the academic and co-curricular programs/experiences of each student, thus acknowledging their work and accomplishments both in and out of the classroom environment. Additionally, more comprehensive student records demonstrate and support the value of co-curricular learning to the college experience and overall success of college students (NASPA website, 2016). Likewise, course syllabi including various aspects of co-curricular learning, help foster the creation of more holistic learning environments.



Conceptually, connecting curricular and co-curricular aspects of higher education enhances student knowledge and the college experience. Within academia, the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to teaching include increased understanding of diverse perspectives, improved creative and cognitive skills, greater student engagement, and heightened ethical sensitivities (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Interdisciplinary collaborations utilized in research also contribute to increased knowledge as a result of sharing ideas through the process (Kezar & Lester, 2009). However, while literature supports academic and student affairs collaborations to enhance student learning, barriers to such efforts continue to exist, thus perpetuating disconnection between these organizational units (Crafts et al., 2001; Johnson & Rayman, 2007; Kezar, 2001a, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Philpott & Strange, 2003).

### **Barriers to Collaboration**

Many barriers to academic and student affairs collaborations are a result of the bureaucratic/hierarchical organizational structures existing within higher education. Hierarchical designs and subsequent lines of communication common to these structures contribute to fragmentation, separation, and isolation found within higher education and student affairs (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pace et al., 2006). Moreover, organizational structures of bureaucracies contribute to the differing responsibilities, working structures, and professional cultures of these isolated, or siloed, units (Crafts et al., 2001; Kezar, 2001a; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Philpott & Strange, 2003). In an effort to support collaborative initiatives, administrators must be aware of these

structural barriers and find ways to overcome them. Described appropriately by Kezar & Lester (2009):

One of the first steps in helping to eradicate these barriers is to be aware of the structures, processes, and routines that prevent collaboration. Through this consciousness, leaders can intentionally change these processes and structures to better support collaborative work. (p. 21)

However, while awareness may help initiate movement toward academic and student affairs collaborations, organizational/structural change lessening institutional fragmentation may be required to accomplish such partnerships (Crafts et al., 2001; Frost et al., 2010; Harrison, 2013; Kezar, 2001b; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Philpott & Strange, 2003).

Differences in professional cultures accompany structural barriers in impeding efforts of connecting the curricular and co-curricular (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Frost et al., 2010; Kezar, 2001a; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Philpott & Strange, 2003). Cultural barriers existing between academic and student affairs begins with limited knowledge and understanding of each other's responsibilities on campus (Kezar, 2017; Philpott & Strange, 2003; Whitt, 2011). Importantly, structural barriers contribute to this phenomenon by creating separation through decreased interactions between these diverse professionals. Decreased interaction leads to decreased understanding of each disciplines' contributions to student learning, growth, and development (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Philpott & Strange, 2003), thus contributing to professional disconnections on college campuses.

### **Overcoming Barriers**

Bureaucratic organizational models common to higher education commonly cause information across the institution to be limited, separated, and fragmented due to

decreased interpersonal interactions and subsequent sharing of knowledge (Gulley & Mullendore, 2014; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Philpott & Strange, 2003). Structural separation such as this perpetuates the disconnection between academic and student affairs educators and can ultimately impede the common goal of higher education. Isolated in bureaucratic silos, people “have more difficulty seeing the overall goal of the organization” (Kezar & Lester, 2009, p. 30). Subsequently, decreasing curricular and co-curricular connections can adversely affect the goal of higher education: the enhancement of student learning, knowledge, growth, and development.

While academic and student affairs relationships and collaborations can be inhibited on college campuses, strategies attempting to overcome such obstructions are clearly defined in the literature. Programming including faculty-in-residence programs, learning communities, and first-year programs, is directed at obtaining contributions from both academic and student affairs educators, thus enhancing interdisciplinary collaboration and associated student learning (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Feldman Barr, 2013; Gulley & Mullendore, 2014; Kezar & Lester, 2009).

Additionally, developing an atmosphere where academic and student affairs educators work more closely together helps increase awareness of professional goals within each organizational unit, thus helping to increase academic and student affairs connections (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar, 2001a; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Martin & Samuels, 2001; Pace et al., 2006; Philpott & Strange, 2003; Whitt et al., 2008). Whereas programming may be helpful in improving connections between academic and student

affairs educators, other strategies, including administrative support/leadership and organizational change, can also be effective in connecting the two organizational higher education units.

### **Administrative Support and Leadership**

Important to the development of academic and student affairs collaborations is senior-level administrator support. Data gathered by ACPA and NASPA in a national survey suggested that support from senior administrators “was a very successful strategy for creating partnerships between academic and student affairs” (Kezar, 2001a, p. 45). While organizational members may be hesitant to work collaboratively, senior administrator support helps create a sense of buy-in from the organization, thus potentially decreasing members’ feelings of hesitation (Crafts et al., 2001; Fenneberg & Hancock, 2018; Fuller & Haugabrook, 2001; Kezar, 2001a; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Philpott & Strange, 2003). Creating a sense of buy-in within the organization helps drive academic and student affairs partnerships forward (Fuller & Haugabrook, 2001; Kezar, 2001a; Philpott & Strange, 2003; Slantcheva-Durst, 2014), increasing professional connections while enhancing student learning.

Changes in administrators’ leadership styles can also contribute to increased partnerships between the curriculum and co-curriculum (Kezar, 2001a, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016; Whitt et al., 2008). Due to organizational structures, some leaders, especially those in bureaucracies, may not always choose an inclusive leadership style. However, individuals operating under the assumptions of participatory/shared leadership, transformational leadership, and systemic leadership all lend themselves to leader/follower inclusivity. Consequently, leaders adhering to such philosophies may be

more effective in creating collaborations across their respective institutions as relationship building is emphasized within these leadership models (Allen & Cherrey, 2000; Hui-Chao, 2002; Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016; Slantcheva-Durst, 2014).

### **Organizational Change**

Changes within academic organizations are likely necessary to create interdisciplinary partnerships contributing to more holistic and comprehensive learning environments (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar, 2001b; Kezar & Lester, 2009). Initiating such change requires senior administrator support and reinforcement of a shared vision of educational goals (Crafts et al., 2001; Fuller & Haugabrook, 2001; Kezar, 2001b; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Philpott & Strange, 2003). Most importantly, however, is that organizations must be willing to change their values and beliefs (Craig, 2004). Implementing such change requires structural and professional cultural barriers between academics and student affairs be broken down. Strategies include the use of inclusive institutional mission statements and changing the hierarchal reporting lines of academic and student affairs educators common to higher education (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Whitt et al., 2008).

Regarding institutional mission statements, it is suggested that concepts of collaborations and partnerships be indicated in the statement (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Whitt et al., 2008). The purpose of an institutional mission statement is to identify the underlying philosophy and goal of the organization. Therefore, institutional mission statements, including ideas regarding partnerships and collaborations, may help steer senior administrators toward increased interdisciplinary connections (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Further, “by creating a common vision of learning, an institution strives to

have people think about learning in the same way” (Kezar, 2001b, p. 65). Therefore, by including partnerships and collaborations in the mission, a foundation can be positioned to support interdisciplinary connections.

Changing common hierarchal reporting lines within higher education may also increase connections between academic and student affairs educators. Within the bureaucratic structure of many institutions, reporting lines are vertical in nature, moving up the chain of command (Birnbaum, 1988; Hui-Chao, 2002; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Shults, 2008). Vertical organizational designs such as these contribute to the separation found within higher education, correspondingly keeping academics and student affairs educators detached (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pace et al., 2006). Therefore, moving away from vertical reporting lines and moving to more horizontal lines of reporting may create more connections between academic and student affairs educators. Such increased connections can thus help bridge professional gaps existing between the distinct organizational units by allowing them to function more closely together (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Crafts et al., 2001; Whitt et al., 2008). Lastly, other strategies to consider for instituting organizational change include operating under assumptions of participatory leadership and encouraging open and honest dialog regarding change within the organization (Craig, 2004).

### **Gaps in the Literature**

Current literature contends that academic and student affairs collaborations are instrumental in creating holistic learning environments and enhancing the college experience (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh et al., 2005). While previous studies examine elements of student success (e.g., student engagement and

learning), gaps in the literature exist around educators' perceptions of such collaboration. More specifically, perceptions of academic and student affairs educators regarding what collaboration means, how collaborations influence the college experience, and what contributes to a collaborations' success have yet to be addressed. Accordingly, how academic and student affairs educators make meaning of their collaborations was the focus of this inquiry.

Another gap in current literature is that most studies in the area of academic and student affairs collaboration are guided by research questions demanding quantitative research methodologies. Methodologies like these are theory-based and linear, seeking to explain and predict hypotheses (Guido, Chávez, & Lincoln, 2010). Since previous studies (e.g., Kuh et al., 2005; Whitt et al., 2008) examined influences of academic and student affairs collaborations to student success, outcomes including retention and graduation rates were examined and measured quantitatively. While quantitative measures may provide useful information to an inquiry, rarely do such measures examine specific context around a research question. Because this inquiry sought meaning making in a contextual environment with academic and student affairs collaborations, a multi-method approach was used to collect data.

### **Chapter Summary**

Because the focus of this inquiry was to better understand how academic and student affairs educators make meaning of their collaboration on a college campus, complexities existing within higher education must be considered. Various aspects of higher education and student affairs including organizational structure, organizational culture and climate, as well as, leadership can influence the development and integration

of academic/student affairs collaborations. As such, these influences must be considered while attempting to create holistic college campuses conducive to student growth and development.

Higher education, as an organizational structure, operates differently from organizations in the corporate context (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013). Common characteristics to academia include highly professional employees, the presence of cosmopolitans, multiple organizational structures, conflict over the appropriate product of higher education, goal ambiguity, client-focused missions, multiple and often-conflicting roles, and environmental vulnerability (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013; Manning et al., 2014). While the existence of these characteristics separates higher education from the corporate world, they also contribute to the multitude of complexities within such organizations.

Adding to the unique complexities occurring within higher education are elements of organizational/campus culture and climate. While organizational/campus culture is concerned with values and beliefs set forth in the organization, organizational/campus climate is associated with members' perceptions of organizational life (Austin, 1994). Values associated with campus culture include those of the institution and its' members. These values are reflected in institutional history and traditions, setting the tone for what is important to the institution (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Kuh et al., 1991; Manning, 2000, 2013). Moreover, associated campus climates influence student and faculty satisfaction and retention (Bender, 2009; Jayakumar et al., 2009) and therefore warrant consideration for higher education leaders and administrators.



Leaders within academic organizations must navigate the multitude of organizational complexities common to academia. Due to large numbers of stakeholders, decision making becomes a complex process requiring significant understanding of organizational perspectives and processes (Hendrickson et al., 2013). Generally, leaders more familiar with these processes are more successful than those who are not (Manning, 2013). Furthermore, leadership styles can influence relationship building through an organization, potentially affecting collaborations (Allen & Cherrey, 2000; Hui-Chao, 2002; Kezar, 2017; Slantcheva-Durst, 2014). Leaders within bureaucratic structures tend to act more directive, whereas leaders within collegial and/or political organizational structures are more participative in their leadership styles (Amey, 2006; Birnbaum, 1988; Burkhardt, 2002; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Manning, 2013; van Ameijde et al., 2009; Whitt et al., 2008). Whereas participative, or shared, leadership styles positively influence the creation of collaborations (Craig, 2004), directive leadership may impede such efforts. Consequently, leadership styles more participatory in nature help foster academic and student affairs collaborations on campus.

While academic and student affairs educators share the same goal of increasing student knowledge and growth, differences between organizational units exist (Feldman Barr, 2013; Kezar, 2001a). Considering working structures, secondary to academic training and professional responsibilities, faculty tend to work more in isolation as compared to student affairs educators (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Differences are also seen in rewards structures as faculty aspire to attain tenure, a reward not applicable to student affairs educators (Carpenter et al., 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000). Aside from these differences, faculty and student affairs educators are

instrumental in student learning and are therefore encouraged to work more collaboratively across campus.

Curricular and co-curricular collaborative programming implemented at institutions of higher education include faculty-in-residence programs, learning communities, and first-year programs (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Feldman Barr, 2013; Guarasci, 2001; Gulley & Mullendore, 2014; Kuh et al., 2005). These types of programs are designed to enhance knowledge production through increased interactions between students, faculty, and student affairs educators. However, bureaucratic organizational structures entwined within higher education can impede the development of such programming. Since bureaucracies are associated with creating academic silos, interactions between members in separated areas within the organization can be challenging. Strategies utilized to overcome these obstacles include academic support and potential organizational restructuring. Given this inquiry focused on meaning making of academic and student affairs collaborations, understanding the multitude of complexities operating within higher education is imperative for those wishing to further bridge the gaps between these organizational units and create lasting partnerships on campus.

### **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter provides an overview of the philosophical tenants and methodology that guided this inquiry. Specifically, the philosophical tenants of constructivism, as well as the methodology of narrative inquiry are discussed. This chapter also provides information on the study's participants and university setting, as well as methods of data collection and analysis. Last, criteria supporting rigor of the study is identified and described.

Engaging in research, investigators begin the process by first considering their personal philosophical assumptions and beliefs pertaining to the discovery of truth. Reflecting upon and articulating these perspectives serves as a guide for inquiry, as well as informs readers of the investigator's underlying philosophical beliefs. Importantly, terminology related to the acquisition of truth is addressed first.

A paradigm, defined as a particular belief system contributing to assumptions about truth is, in essence, considered a worldview which guides inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). Paradigms provide individuals perspectives on how to think about, gain, and interpret knowledge about the world (Guido et al., 2010). In effect, paradigms help guide action and influence what investigators research, as well as how they conduct their chosen study (Evans et al., 2010). Paradigms are composed of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology.

Ontology refers to the nature of truth/reality, focusing on what makes up the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guido et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2006). Stated otherwise, ontology is a “set of related assumptions associated with explanations or questions about the nature or structure of reality or existence” (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014, p. 9). Epistemology represents the origins of knowledge (Guido et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2006; Merriam, 2009; Patton et al., 2016; Schwandt, 2007). More specifically, epistemology denotes questions regarding the acquisition of truth and addresses the issue of how truth is known (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guido et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2006). In research, epistemology is the relationship between the researcher and the researched.

Informed by a study’s ontology and epistemology, methodology refers to the strategy and justification of methods used in an inquiry (Guido et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2006). Methodologies involve “analysis of the assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry (that, in turn, governs the use of particular methods)” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 193). Simply stated, methodology represents a strategy behind the methods used in the inquiry (Jones et al., 2006). Taken from a holistic perspective, the combination of epistemology, ontology, and methodology constitute a paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guido et al., 2010).

### **Constructivist Paradigm**

Constructivist paradigms are employed when researchers want to make sense of participants’ stories and experiences (Creswell, 2013; Guido et al., 2010; Merriam, 2009), thus providing contextual knowledge to research. Within the constructivist paradigm, knowledge is socially constructed while truth is local and specific to each participant

(Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Researchers employing constructivist paradigms co-construct knowledge with participants, allowing both researcher and participant voices/stories to be heard (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Further, constructivist paradigms seek to understand diverse perspectives and experiences, providing needed insight within higher education (Guido et al., 2010).

Ontological beliefs held by constructivists contend that truth is individual and based on social interactions, leading to the existence of multiple truths/realities (Creswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Guido et al., 2010). Personally, such beliefs resonate strongly with me as I believe truth is different among individuals based on their life experiences. Further, I believe individual truths must be explored to create a greater understanding of the world. Accordingly, the ontology associated with a constructivist paradigm is consistent with my worldview and fittingly guided this research.

Epistemological beliefs of constructivism contend that reality is shaped and co-constructed by individual experiences (Creswell, 2013). Further, truth/reality becomes co-constructed through dialog and interaction between investigator and participant (Creswell, 2013; Guido et al., 2010). As such, engagement in the co-construction of knowledge provides readers thick and rich descriptions of the phenomenon most often experienced by both participants and investigator.

Axiological beliefs describe the role of values guiding an inquiry (Creswell, 2013). Axiological beliefs of constructivism contend that individual values be honored throughout the study. Supporting the existence of multiple realities and truth, researchers employing a constructivist axiology honor and make meaning of multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Since this inquiry sought perspectives from both academic and student

affairs educators, individual values regarding collaboration and working relationships on campus were honored as increased understanding was sought. Based on a desire to find meaning through this inquiry, constructivist axiology, ontology, and epistemology formed the underlying philosophical underpinnings of this study. Additionally, as meaning making was sought throughout this inquiry, a methodology with a collective nature was applied. More specifically, narrative inquiry as a methodological strategy guided this research.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry is used to generate and analyze stories regarding individual life experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Schwandt, 2007). Narrative inquiry “assumes that people construct their realities through narrating their stories” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 153) thus inviting both investigator and participant to co-construct knowledge through storytelling (Clandinin, 2016; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Using stories as data, narrative inquiry subsequently allows multiple voices and perspectives to be heard through the research process, hence providing a way to understand experiences (Clandinin, 2016). Accordingly, attempting to make meaning of academic and student affairs collaborations throughout this study, narrative inquiry was used to allow experiences and voices of both academic and student affairs educators to be heard.

Abiding to narrative inquiry, the role of the investigator is to interact openly and honestly with participants, allowing the co-construction of reality to emerge (Clandinin, 2016; Creswell, 2013). Since narrative inquiry calls for increased interaction between investigator and participant for the purpose of co-constructing knowledge, their relationships become instrumental to the process. Such relationships shift power to both

investigator and participant, allowing for mutual and sincere interactions throughout the research process (Clandinin, 2007, 2016). Accordingly, through this inquiry, I established relationships with participants by using storytelling as an avenue to share experiences and subsequent meaning making of academic and student affairs collaborations and working relationships on a college campus.

### **Participants and Setting**

Because an increased understanding of professional experiences was sought, particularly regarding a collaboration's influence on the college experience, collaborative programs fostering student growth and development were chosen as the focus of this inquiry. As such, academic and student affairs educators engaged in first-year experience and/or experiential learning programs on campus, were selected as participants for this inquiry. Notably, mid-level professionals within academic and student affairs offices were chosen because they are the individuals participating in such collaborative initiatives at the institution.

A total of seven mid-level academic and student affairs educators participated in this inquiry. Four participants were housed within academic affairs while three were housed within student affairs. Participants within academic affairs included two full-time, tenured faculty, as well as two professionals holding position of director. Notably, while both directors were employed within academic affairs, they held student affairs terminal degrees. Participants within student affairs included one director, one assistant director, and one coordinator. Additionally, participants' length of employment at the university varied, ranging from less than five years to more than 25 years. Due to a small sample size and the need to honor and protect participant anonymity, identifiable information

including gender, race, ethnicity, position, title, and name was not included in this discourse. Participants chose their own pseudonyms which were used and cited throughout this study.

This inquiry was conducted at an urban, public, four-year research university located in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. Remaining in line with honoring and protecting participant anonymity, the institution is hereafter referred to as Mountain University. While Mountain University enrolls undergraduate and graduate students, the current undergraduate population is larger. Per the institution's website, total enrollment in Fall 2016 was just under 15,000 students with the undergraduate population encompassing 71% of enrollment while 29% was comprised of graduate students. Consisting of eight schools and colleges, over 100 degree programs (e.g., bachelor's, master's, doctoral, professional) are offered at the university. Popular undergraduate majors include biology, psychology, pre-engineering, economics, and music. At the graduate level, popular programs include Masters' of Business Administration, public administration, counseling, and education ([Mountain University] website, 2017). Most students enrolled at Mountain University are in-state residents, many of which commute to campus.

While Mountain University currently enrolls a greater number of undergraduate students, that was not always the case. Approximately 12 years ago, the university was comprised of a greater number of graduate students compared to undergraduate students and subsequently began to shift focus toward increasing the undergraduate population. Consequently, in an effort to increase undergraduate enrollment, Mountain University



senior administrators charged mid-level administrators with creating initiatives to enhance the institutions' identity, as well as help build components unique to the university. With the intention of improving the undergraduate experience, one initiative explored through the process was developing and implementing first-year seminar courses.

Initial concepts regarding the development and implementation of first-year seminar courses began with forming a team of academic affairs and student affairs educators to discuss how such courses should be designed and implemented. Through this dialog, first-year seminar courses were developed and designed as three-credit hour courses utilizing both faculty and student affairs educators for instruction. Over the past 12 years, this initiative has grown and since given rise to what is now referred to as First-Year Experiences (FYE). Currently, FYE is housed within academic affairs and is guided by a director who works with professionals across campus to collaborate in first-year programming.

First-Year Experiences at Mountain University are available for all incoming students and are divided into three options: college success courses (UNIV), first-year seminars (FYS), and learning communities (LC). First-Year Experience classes are intended to provide a supportive environment to help new students navigate, engage, and succeed in their college experience. As such, all FYE courses are designed to assist students with a variety of skills including writing, critical thinking, and time management, as well as connect students to available resources on campus (e.g., Writing Center, Career Center, Library). In addition to including academic and student affairs educators, peer mentors are also used in the delivery of FYE courses ([Mountain

University] FYE Course Offerings, 2017). Connecting students with faculty, staff, peer mentors, and peers, FYE courses help support and engage students while forming a sense of community on campus.

Within FYE, differences exist between the UNIV, FYS, and LC options. College success (UNIV) courses are one-credit hour courses taken as electives. UNIV courses are designed to prepare and assist students with navigating college life and are taught either by faculty, student affairs educators, or academic affairs staff. First-Year Seminars (FYS), on the other hand, are three-credit hour courses that count towards a students' core curriculum. FYS courses are topic based and taught by faculty. However, part of each course instructs first-year transition skills including study skills, writing skills, time management, and campus engagement. These skills are addressed in associated workshops which are taught generally by student affairs educators. Thus, as part of enrollment in an FYS course, students are required to complete three workshops during the semester. The third option, learning communities (LC), are generally themed (e.g., engineering learning community) and pair two, three-credit hour, courses together (e.g., engineering and math). Students in LC subsequently enroll in both courses, taking them together as a cohort. While enrollment in FYE courses is recommended for all in-coming students, it is not yet required by the university.

Similar to FYE, the Experiential Learning Center (ELC) is focused on holistic development of students. Opportunities for students within ELC include internships, professional experiences, service trips, undergraduate research, and study abroad. ELC programs allow students to gain knowledge and skills outside of the classroom environment, thus fostering civic engagement, cultural awareness, career development,

and leadership skills ([Mountain University] Experiential Learning Center website, 2017). ELC programs engage students with faculty, academic affairs professionals, student affairs educators, as well as external professionals, helping foster holistic development.

Since my research question was aimed specifically at faculty and student affairs educators, purposeful sampling was used to identify potential study participants (Patton et al., 2016). Purposeful sampling allowed me to select “individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2013, p.156). Further, individuals known as gatekeepers were utilized to assist with identification and recruitment of participants. Gatekeepers are “individuals who know individuals and/or settings that meet the sampling criteria determined by the researcher” (Jones et al., 2006, p. 74). Gatekeepers utilized in this study included senior administrators from both academic and student affairs divisions at the university.

Snowball sampling was also used to identify and recruit additional participants (Patton et al., 2016). Snowball sampling happens when current participants inform investigators of other individuals meeting the study’s criteria (Merriam, 2009). Hence, the use of purposeful sampling, gatekeepers, and subsequent snowball sampling helped target appropriate participants while also establishing early levels of trust with those participants. Finally, while participants were selected based upon their involvement in first-year and/or experiential learning programs across campus, diversity in professional position was sought as I pursued a wide-range of stories and perspectives.

Prior to beginning my inquiry, I submitted an application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Northern Colorado to obtain approval for this research. The application process was completed online and included the following information: purpose and significance of the study, participant and setting information, data collection and analysis procedures, information regarding data storage and confidentiality, participant risk and benefit information, as well as costs and compensation. Also included were copies of interview questions and participant consent forms. Following submission, the application was reviewed by the IRB committee. The committee then contacted me, requiring one minor revision to the consent form. Once revised, I obtained final approval and was able to begin this inquiry. A copy of the IRB Approval Letter can be found in Appendix C.

### **Methods**

Corresponding with narrative inquiry and focusing on storytelling, the primary methods utilized for this inquiry were participant interviews and focus groups. Initially, two individual, semi-structured, interviews were conducted with each participant. Individual interviews attempt to “capture the deep meaning of experience in the participants’ own words” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 93), thus contributing to individual meaning making. Further, semi-structured interview questions are designed to be more flexible and open-ended, allowing information to emerge through the conversation (Merriam, 2009). Since the purpose of this inquiry was to understand individual meaning making, methods such as these encouraged the sharing and emergence of ideas between investigator and participants.

## Interviews

Initial individual interview questions focused on the participant and their role on campus. Due to the emergent design of this inquiry, follow-up questions for the second individual interview and focus group were based on initial participant responses. By and large, questions were aimed at revealing individual meaning making of academic and student affairs collaborations on campus. Individual interview questions included:

- What does collaboration mean to you?
  - Can you think of a metaphor or symbol for this relationship?
- Describe the collaboration that you are involved with. Please share stories about encounters you share with those you collaborate with.
- In what ways do academic and student affairs collaborations influence a student's college experience?
- In what ways do academic and student affairs collaborations benefit the institution?
- How do you describe a successful collaboration?
- Describe what you have learned through your process of collaboration.
- Describe how your collaboration influenced your personal and/or professional development.
- Please describe how institutional leadership influences your collaborations.
- Please describe additional factors that influence your collaborations.
- Describe how connected you feel with those you collaborate with.
  - How does physical location of offices influence connectedness?

- Prior to participating in your current collaboration, please describe any expectations and/or beliefs you held regarding academic and student affairs partnerships.
  - Describe how those expectations and/or beliefs have played out for you in your current collaborations.
- Help me understand what you would change, if you could, about academic and student affairs collaborations on this campus.

Each individual interview lasted approximately 60 minutes in length. The first interview focused primarily on getting acquainted with the participant. Initially, conversations regarding individual backgrounds and positions in higher education were discussed. As the interview progressed, perspectives and meaning making of academic and student affairs professional collaborations were addressed. The second interview focused more on participants' meaning of collaborations and interdisciplinary working relationships. Initially, I followed-up on information discussed during our first interview. However, my intention through the remainder of the second interview was to further explore meaning making around academic and student affairs collaborations. While I began this inquiry with individual interviews, I concluded data collection with a focus group interview.

### **Focus Groups**

Focus groups “bring together a group of people to discuss a particular topic” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 119). Compared to individual interviews, bringing together a group of participants for a focus group subsequently allows for discussion of “a wider variety of information” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 145). Additionally, as group interaction

provides an opening for sharing a multitude of diverse experiences and perspectives, data collection becomes enriched through the process. Hence, once individual interviews were completed, I conducted a focus group interview. The overall intention of utilizing a focus group is to build upon previously collected stories within an inclusive environment, thus enriching the stories and subsequent understanding of them. While all seven participants were invited to attend, two individuals had professional obligations which kept them from participating. However, the remaining five participants joined in the focus group interview which lasted one hour. Questions asked of participants during this interview were based on information that emerged through previous individual interviews. Focus group questions included:

- Besides putting people together to collaborate, what can administrators do to build cross-campus, or cross-disciplinary relationships?
- How can administrators contribute to helping you feel valued?
  - And, how can they help you feel value in your work?
- A cultural divide between AA and SA has historically existed for a long period of time within higher education. How do you see collaborations influencing that divide?
- What's needed on this campus, to not only sustain, but grow collaborations?
- Please describe any new insight that participation in this study has offered you.

### **Data Analysis and Rigor**

Through a constructivist lens, data and data analysis emerge as a phenomenon is uncovered (Guido et al., 2010). In this study, data analysis was accomplished through a process known as crystallization. Considered a more “flexible way of thinking” (Marshall

& Rossman, 2011, p. 43) crystallization encourages viewing data from multiple angles (Ellingson, 2009). Analogous to crystals' ability to both reflect and refract, used in a research context, crystallization allows multiple perspectives to emerge through the process. Applying crystallization, researchers are encouraged to use their intuition and insight to help understand and make sense of the data (Ellingson, 2009).

For this inquiry, all individual and focus group interviews were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed by myself, the researcher. Through data collection and analysis processes, each interview was listened to and reviewed numerous times. During the transcription process, I listened to data while entering initial information, as well as re-listening repeatedly to assure accuracy of the transcription. Each hour of interview time required a minimum of six hours for transcription. While an intensive process, transcribing and re-listening to all interviews allowed me to immerse myself more fully in the data and gain a better understanding of participant perspectives regarding collaboration. Once transcribed, continued review of data revealed common themes emerging through the study. Identification of common themes serves to help make sense and meaning of data and subsequent findings (Merriam, 2009). Thus, common themes were noted and discussed with participants, as well as external reviewers, to assure rigor (i.e., trustworthiness and authenticity) of the data.

Describing quality of a study, trustworthiness is established "to ensure continuity and congruence among all elements of the qualitative research process" (Jones et al., 2006, p. 99). Stated otherwise, trustworthiness describes the accuracy of data. Techniques employed to achieve trustworthiness include member checks and peer debriefing. Member checks involve asking participants if their stories are being accurately described



(Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Schwandt, 2007).

Utilizing this technique, participants have the opportunity to react and provide input to interpretations drawn from their stories (Jones et al., 2006). Throughout this inquiry, I verified my interpretation of individual stories separately with each participant, as well as collectively during the focus group interview. Importantly, while member checking was addressed specifically at the beginning of the second individual interview and focus group interview, I checked with participants continually, during all interviews, to assure I was correctly interpreting their perceptions and understanding of collaboration.

Recruitment of external reviewers for the practice of peer debriefing was also used to review quality of this study and its processes. The technique of peer debriefing is used when investigators call upon trusted and knowledgeable external reviewers to review analysis processes and findings noted by the investigator (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Schwandt, 2007). As such, I asked two professional colleagues to review data and associated interpretations and findings of this inquiry. While not associated with Mountain University, one colleague was a tenured professor while the other was a senior student affairs administrator. Following data review, I met with each external reviewer separately to discuss processes, interpretations, and findings. In each case, similar themes and interpretations were noted, thus contributing to rigor of the inquiry.

Measures used to assess rigor include trustworthiness and authenticity criteria (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Schwandt, 2007). To assure research quality, it is imperative researchers consider and appropriately address each of these components throughout the process of the study. Rigor is then

evaluated by how well the researchers accomplished this task (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Focusing on a study's methods, trustworthiness criteria includes: transferability, dependability, credibility, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Schwandt, 2007). Focusing on a study's participants, authenticity criteria includes: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Schwandt, 2007).

### **Rigor: Trustworthiness Criteria**

How readers connect with findings and subsequently apply them to their own circumstances is the trustworthiness criteria known as transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Co-construction of knowledge between investigator and participant allows for rich and thick descriptions of identified themes and subsequent meaning making. Additionally, providing thick descriptions engages readers and contributes to transferability. Thus, through analysis and subsequent reporting of this inquiry, rich, thick descriptions of data and associated findings was used to engage readers and lend to transferability.

Dependability focuses more on the process of an inquiry and implies that "findings will endure over time" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 475). Stated otherwise, findings would be similar if the study was repeated. Dependability is closely tied with credibility (Shenton, 2004) as the latter addresses accuracy of the investigators portrayal of participant stories. Credibility examines whether findings are reliable based on collected data, as well as consistent with participant realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). During this inquiry, the use of member checking during all interviews,

as well as peer debriefing, addressed credibility. Further, an audit trail was used to support the inquiry's processes, findings, and subsequent dependability.

An audit trail tracks processes of the investigator through the inquiry, thus supporting dependability of the study. Audit trails are designed to allow outside reviewers to “explore the process, judge the decisions that were made, and understand what salient factors in the context led the evaluator to the decisions and interpretations made” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 242). Through this inquiry, my audit trail consisted of three full notebooks containing interview notes, process notes, trustworthiness notes, observations, ideas, and interpretations. Additionally, participant data and subsequent transcriptions comprised an integral part of the audit trail. As such, processes and interpretations can be tracked, thus contributing to dependability of the study.

Last, the final criteria of trustworthiness is confirmability. Addressing appropriateness of data, confirmability implies that data and associated findings can be confirmed by others (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Schwandt, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). As such, the aforementioned audit trail reinforced confirmability, as well as dependability, of this study. Compiled during the course of the inquiry, the audit trail provided information regarding how and why interpretations were formed. Reviewing the audit trail, processes and related findings were then examined by external reviewers, reinforcing confirmability of the study.

### **Rigor: Authenticity Criteria**

Authenticity criteria focus on participants and begin with the specific element of fairness. Fairness involves examination of how participants were treated during the study,

as well as accuracy of descriptions of their stories (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Treating participants with fairness includes carrying out the inquiry “from approximately equal positions of power, and with the same (equal) information available to all” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 246). Accordingly, all participants were treated equally through the process and were given the same information regarding the study. Initially, participants were required to sign a consent form before engaging in the inquiry. The consent form provided information on the research purpose and procedures, in addition to potential risks and benefits associated with the study. Furthermore, information regarding participants’ privacy and data storage processes was also discussed. Importantly, participants were notified (i.e., verbally and in the consent form) that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Last, as previously discussed, member checking was used to assure accuracy of participant stories and subsequent meaning making.

Increased understanding and self-awareness gained through the research process is known as ontological authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Continued dialog between participants and investigator identifies if ontological authenticity is happening, and was utilized throughout the course of the inquiry. Throughout our interviews, participants repeatedly commented how participation in this study helped them reflect more on their collaborative experiences and professional practices. Stated by Albert:

This study itself is an opportunity for collaboration . . . I learned stuff today that I didn’t know . . . [and] I’ll be happier when I leave because now I am even more sure than ever before that this is a useful way to spend my time.

Undertakings of self-reflection like this demonstrated the occurrence of ontological authenticity, and was noted among all participants in this study.

Correspondingly, gaining an increased understanding of other individuals' constructions of reality is known as educative authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Stated otherwise, did participants learn more about other people and their construction and understanding of knowledge and truth? Again, continued dialog and participant testimony indicates if such understanding develops through the research process. For this inquiry, dialog during the focus group interview supported educative authenticity. As academic and student affairs educators shared their stories and experiences, they acknowledged gaining a better understanding of other perspectives, particularly regarding collaborations and partnerships on campus. Stated eloquently by Kate:

I need to remember that the things which come naturally to me, or to other student development folks in their area, does not come naturally to faculty because that's not their training or background . . . [so] how do I be more mindful of my role in that piece of collaboration.

Catalytic authenticity refers to whether or not participants are stimulated to take action and make change (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Also revealed through participant testimony, participants suggested involvement in this inquiry caused them to think more critically about forming and sustaining collaborations on campus. Jessica stated, "I can think critically about some of this stuff, and moving forward I'm sure I won't stay at [Mountain University] my whole life, so moving forward it will be helpful in other environments." Additionally, participants discussed considerations regarding growth and change of higher education in general, thus demonstrating aspects of catalytic authenticity.

Finally, tactical authenticity is the last of the authenticity criteria and is the degree to which "participants are empowered to act" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 250). Initially, participants should be "provided with the opportunity to contribute inputs to the

evaluation and to have a hand in shaping its focus and strategies” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 250). Thus, participants were encouraged to play a central role in the inquiry as inclusiveness in the process is one indication that tactical authenticity criteria was addressed (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Tactical authenticity also refers to the degree in which participants are motivated to share their experiences with others in the hope of improving future experiences. Dialog with participants demonstrated this criteria as suggestions regarding development, sustainability, and growth of collaborations on campus were deliberated.

### **Chapter Summary**

Philosophical assumptions and associated terminology were reviewed to understand the investigators’ perspectives regarding the discovery of truth, in this case, how faculty and student affairs professionals make sense of their collaborations. Paradigms reflect investigators’ assumptions of truth and how they think about the world (Guido et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Subsequently, paradigms influence and steer research (Evans et al., 2010; Guido et al., 2010). Referring to the nature of truth and reality, ontology focuses on what makes up the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guido et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2006) while epistemology focuses on the origin of truth, asking, how do we know what we know (Guido et al., 2010)? Informed by ontology and epistemology, methodology is the strategy and justification of methods used in research (Guido et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2006). Taken from a holistic perspective, the combination of ontology, epistemology, and methodology constitute a paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guido et al., 2010).

Aspiring to provide contextual knowledge to research, this inquiry was guided by a constructivist paradigm. Constructivist paradigms are employed when researchers want to make sense of participants' stories and experiences (Creswell, 2013; Guido et al., 2010; Merriam, 2009). Guided by constructivism, investigators co-construct knowledge with participants, allowing both researcher and participant voices/stories to be heard (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). As such, the methodology of narrative inquiry was a good fit for this inquiry.

Employing narrative inquiry invites both investigator and participant to co-construct knowledge through storytelling (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Using stories as data, multiple voices and perspectives are expressed throughout the research process. Important to narrative inquiry is the relationship formed between investigator and participant. Investigators employing this methodology must interact openly and honestly with participants, allowing the co-construction of reality to emerge (Creswell, 2013). Power is also shifted to both investigator and participant, allowing for mutual and sincere interactions throughout the research process (Clandinin, 2007).

Participants chosen for this study were faculty and student affairs educators employed at an urban, public, four-year research institution in the western United States. The use of gatekeepers and purposeful sampling was used to identify participants. Participants included professionals from both higher education organizational units (i.e., academic and student affairs) engaged in first-year and/or experiential learning programs on campus. Diversity in professional position was sought throughout the process as I pursued a wide-range of stories and perspectives.

A total of seven mid-level higher education professionals participated in this inquiry. Of these participants, four were housed within academic affairs and three were housed within student affairs. Academic affairs professionals included two tenured faculty and two program directors, while student affairs professionals included a director, an assistant director, and a coordinator. Participant length of employment at the university ranged from less than five years to more than 25 years. Because of a small sample size and the need to protect participant anonymity, identifiable information including gender, race, ethnicity, position title, and name was not included in this discourse. Participants chose their own pseudonyms, which were used and cited throughout this study.

Remaining in line with protecting participant anonymity, the institutional setting for this inquiry is referred to as Mountain University. Mountain University enrolls undergraduate and graduate students, however, the current undergraduate population is larger. Per the institution's website, the undergraduate population comprises 71% while the graduate population encompasses 29% of total enrollment ([Mountain University] website, 2017). Additionally, most students enrolled at Mountain University are in-state residents, many of which commute to campus.

Methods chosen for this study included individual, as well as, focus group interviews. Interview questions were semi-structured and open-ended, with some emerging as the inquiry progressed. Interviews were approximately 60 minutes in length and were aimed at further exploring understanding and meaning making of academic and



student affairs collaborations. The focus group interview brought participants together to share perspectives, helping to enhance data, and was conducted following the completion of individual interviews.

Adhering to a constructivist paradigm, crystallization was used to analyze data. Crystallization encourages investigators to view data from multiple angles while also calling upon their own insight and intuition to make sense of the data (Ellingson, 2009). Rigor of the study was addressed with techniques such as member checks and peer debriefing. Member checks verify interpretations of data with participants, whereas peer debriefing utilizes external reviewers to assist in reviewing processes and findings implemented by the investigator (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Schwandt, 2007).

Focusing on rigor, trustworthiness and authenticity criteria were addressed. Trustworthiness criteria highlight a study's methods and includes transferability, dependability, credibility, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Schwandt, 2007). Authenticity criteria focus on a study's participants and includes fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Schwandt, 2007). Accordingly, each set of criteria was addressed by the investigator throughout this research process to assure quality and accuracy of the inquiry.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

There are very few things I can do solely that will be as impactful as something that's done collectively. (Aurora, Participant)

Seven academic and student affairs educators were interviewed to discuss how they understand and make meaning of their collaborative experiences on campus for this inquiry. Set at an urban university in the western United States (referred to as Mountain University), all participants were involved in first-year experiences and/or experiential learning collaborations. Participants were mid-level academic and student affairs educators at the university and included faculty, directors, assistant directors, and coordinators. Participants' length of employment at Mountain University varied, ranging from less than five to more than 25 years. More identifiable information including name, position, title, gender, race, ethnicity, and other social identities was not included in this discourse to honor and protect participant anonymity. As such, participants chose their own pseudonyms which were used and cited throughout this study. Pseudonyms chosen by participants were: Albert, Aurora, Ed, Frank, Jessica, Kate, and Todd Allen.

The purpose of this study was to understand how these faculty and student affairs educators understand their collaborative experiences on this large urban campus. Two

individual interviews, as well as one focus group interview, addressed faculty and student affairs collaborations at Mountain University. Guided by the research question:

Q1     How do academic and student affairs educators make meaning of their collaboration on campus?

This inquiry examined the meaning of collaboration, what constitutes a successful collaboration, and how collaborations happen for these professionals in their current interactions. Additionally, benefits and drawbacks of collaborations, as well as elements influencing collaborations were discussed.

### **Meaning of Collaboration**

Conducting this inquiry, I was interested in understanding how participants envision and describe collaboration. Used interchangeably, differentiations exist between the terms coordination, collaboration, and partnership (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). While coordination refers to working together and sharing information, collaboration involves more joint planning and sharing of expertise, goals, and power (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). Collaborations also evolve from an interactive process of relationship building as group members develop “shared rules, norms, and structures” (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016, p. 434) working together over time. Consequently, partnerships function with either coordinated or collaborative philosophies, and often begin with the former and develop into the latter (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016).

When participants in this inquiry were asked what the term collaboration means to them in this organizational context, elements of coordination, as well as collaboration were revealed. All participants discussed coordination as notions of working together and sharing information. For example, Kate said, for her, “collaboration means partnering with other campus departments, or individuals from other campus departments, to work

together to best serve students.” Echoing a similar sentiment, Albert, Aurora, Ed, Frank, Jessica, and Todd Allen also described their collaborations as working with other professionals across campus to achieve a common goal of creating better ways to serve the student population at Mountain University.

Todd Allen emphasized, “just pulling a meeting together is not collaborating.” Instead, he believed the term collaboration means “coming together and creating something that is not just one vision, it’s actually something made of every voice at the table.” Similar ideas of collaboration involving shared visions, goals, and voices were expressed by other participants. Albert proclaimed, “collaboration to me, [means] at the heart of it, we have the same ultimate set of goals.” Importantly, Frank added, “I’m thinking of real collaboration that looks like us having the conversation from scratch, from the very beginning.” Accordingly, elements associated with the term collaboration such as joint planning and shared goals, values, and expertise, were also mentioned by participants when describing their understanding of the term. As such, aspects of coordination and collaboration were important factors of participants’ understanding and meaning making of their collaborations on campus.

### **Sharing and Collaboration**

Educators engaged in this study shared similar opinions and values regarding the college experience. All participants were student-centered and demonstrated a good understanding of student development and the need for a more holistic approach to learning. While housed in different organizational units of the university (i.e., academic

affairs and student affairs) all participants supported shared responsibility for student learning and were committed to creating better ways to serve students at Mountain University.

Participants involved in this inquiry also believed that more can be accomplished through working collaboratively rather than through individual practice. As Albert noted:

Teaching in the first-year seminar has been incredibly rewarding because I get to know students who are not me, and I get to learn how to teach them and I get to learn how to help them, and I realize that I can't help them myself, in ways that student services can help them, incredible ways.

Aurora echoed by stating:

Collaboration for me, is just a necessary part of any effective work. There are very few things I can do solely that will be as impactful as something that's done collectively, especially when we're talking about student affairs, student services, student success, it's not a one-unit, one-person ordeal.

Importantly, Kate acknowledged:

We as an institution have a responsibility to educate and inform students. Not to hand-hold, but to help, support, and work with [them] along the way, to help them navigate. That cannot be done by one office on campus and that definitely cannot be done at an institutional level if everyone is working in silos.

Hence, shared beliefs and values were important to participants involved in this inquiry and often served as a framework for their collaborative initiatives across campus.

Additionally, metaphors illustrated by participants when describing their understanding and meaning making of collaboration revealed the importance of sharing.

While speaking with participants about the meaning of collaboration, I asked each person to share a metaphor regarding their description and understanding of the term.

Metaphors were creative and demonstrated an underlying importance of shared understanding and beliefs. For example, Jessica described collaboration as “building a bridge.” Collaborators work from their respective sides to build a bridge because they

have a “shared understanding that eventually we’ll meet in the middle and will both benefit from this nice bridge that’s formed.” Frank’s metaphor also implied shared understanding as the basis of collaboration. Describing collaboration like cooking, Frank emphasized the importance of shared understanding in terms of intentionality. In other words, being “intentional about, not just what ingredients you’re going to need to make a particular recipe, but talking about what recipe you even want to make together and why you should be the ones making that recipe.” Accordingly, intentionality and shared understanding serve as a foundation for collaboration.

Similarly, creating shared goals through the process of collaboration was equally important for participants. Frank stressed the significance by asserting that from the onset of the collaborative process, “we talk about, what are we trying to do here, are we on the same page, and do we value the same things?” Jessica echoed that opinion stating that a “shared understanding of the mission” is important because it serves as the basis of collaboration. Jessica emphasized “if we can get on the same page about that, communication should fall into place.” Working together toward collaborative goals was also important to Albert, who thinks that “collaboration involves being on the same team [and] having goals that at least overlap, if not are identical.” Aurora echoed these sentiments while describing her metaphor for collaboration. Aurora’s metaphor is one of a family and she explained while each family member is different, they are “ultimately in this together . . . [to] work toward the bigger end.” Expressions like these indicated that, for these participants, creating shared goals helps set the stage for collaborative work.

Importantly, while participants implied that sharing values and goals serves as a foundation for collaboration, willingness to share information is also critical to the process.

Todd Allen, who described himself as someone who has always been a positive collaborator, emphasized the importance of coming together and sharing ideas and information when engaged in collaborations. He asserted:

If you're not willing to do that [share], then it's not going to work. I think some people want to own it. They want credit. They want that recognition. If that's something that's important to you, then I don't know if you're going to be a good collaborator.

Todd Allen reiterated the importance of sharing when describing his metaphor for collaboration. He views collaboration as climbing a mountain and “the end goal, the vision, the whatever, is at the top of the mountain.” He emphasized, however, while people are working to get up the mountain and attain the end goal, sharing and supporting each other up the path is essential. Understanding there may be differing challenges for everyone, collaborators must “support each other . . . make that commitment . . . [and understand] we're all going to get there.”

Also discussing the significance of sharing, Ed articulated, “I think the key to collaboration is sharing your ideas so that those who are responsible for implementing the same responsibility in a different department can see it, learn from each other, and [then] implement.” Learning from each other was also important to Albert as he stated, “if I'm more aware of students' social and personal development, I might be able to help that, and if they [student affairs] are more aware of what goes on academically, then they might be able to facilitate that.” Thus, increased knowledge helps serve students in a

more holistic fashion. However, while sharing ideas and information was significant to participants, sharing expertise was also vital.

Conversing about faculty and student affairs collaborations at Mountain University, all participants emphasized the importance of sharing their knowledge, expertise, and experience while engaging in collaborative initiatives. Regarding a partnership with FYE, Frank noted different knowledge bases of faculty compared to student affairs educators and emphasized that individuals must rely on the expertise of each other during the collaborative process. Other participants discussed similar feelings. Aurora articulated:

What I like about the notion of collaboration is you're asking people to come to the table. And, honoring their skill set, their abilities, and maybe knowing that each person has their areas of expertise, coming together in a collaborative spirit.

Kate also highlighted the importance of sharing ideas and areas of expertise noting that "education is really kind of a shared experience."

Kate's metaphor for collaboration placed emphasis on shared experience in the learning process. Posing the metaphor question to Kate, she described one from a former Nepalese student's perspective of education in the United States. The metaphor described how someone eats a banana, which symbolized education. Kate's student described experiences in Nepalese higher education as a professor holding a banana, peeling the banana, breaking the banana, and then feeding the banana to students. Whereas in the United States, a professor shows a student the banana and then gives it to the student. Next, the professor talks about the banana and students learn to peel it for themselves. Professors then discuss the importance of eating the banana, allowing students to learn



how to break it and eat it on their own. Identifying with this metaphor, Kate expressed how it applies to first-year students as she stated:

Our job is to present information and resources to students and challenge them to think critically about the information we're telling them, and to create their own questions and learn how to relate that to their life and being a college student.

Albert reaffirmed this thought:

I want students to become students. To understand that life is not being fed the answers to a standardized test, which is a lot of, not all, but a lot of what they get in high school and now they have a chance to think and actively construct who they want to be.

Further reinforcing the importance of sharing ideas and learning from each other, Kate explained, "I shouldn't just be telling students what to think . . . we are sharing ideas together and I learn from my students as well, just as I hope they're learning from me, [so] learning from each other." As such, stories and sentiments like these indicate that sharing of values, goals, ideas, expertise, and information were all essential to participants when engaging in collaboration on campus. Moreover, the process of collaboration, including relationship building and trust between collaborators, was also significant for those involved in this inquiry.

### **Process of Collaboration**

Motivated by a common goal of improving the student college experience, participants in this inquiry discussed the importance of the collaborative process, as well as its outcome. Since this study was aimed at understanding collaboration, mid-level professionals were asked to participate because they are charged with engaging in such efforts across the Mountain University campus. Participants held positions of director, assistant director, coordinator, and faculty and while outcomes of collaboration were

important to some, particularly those in director positions, the process of collaboration was important to all participants.

Participants suggested the key elements of the process of collaboration include establishing good communication, finding a common language, building relationships, and establishing trust. For example, Frank and Todd Allen expressed the importance of being included in conversations pertaining to collaborations from the start. Conveying inclusive practices, each one expressed that being a part of something from its inception allows multiple voices to be represented, thus enriching the collaborative process. Jessica added that inclusion in something from the beginning is appreciated because it sets a tone that she is valued in the process. Sharing her story, Jessica discussed how when she was approached to collaborate, “we kind of sat down, wrote out a list of expectations . . . and worked from there.” Being included in this manner, Jessica felt valued in the process, contributing to her enjoying a more positive collaborative experience.

Corresponding with previous literature examining barriers between academic and student affairs educators, participants also discussed the importance of establishing a common language while collaborating. Since academic and student affairs educators function differently on campus, each has limited understanding of the other’s roles and responsibilities (Kezar, 2017; Philpott & Strange, 2003; Whitt, 2011). As such, disconnections between these professionals exist and were noted by participants, particularly regarding language usage. Todd Allen, who has experience as both an academic and student affairs educator, explained that part of his role is to “translate a lot for folks.” He believes that when people collaborate, many times they want the same things, however due to professional disconnections they are “choosing the wrong words

for each other.” For example, collaboration can be challenging because when a non-faculty member requests to present material during a scheduled class-time, some faculty are reluctant to share this time. However, if professionals understood more about the importance of each other’s roles, communication could be more effective and support, rather than hinder, collaboration.

Because language common to faculty is different than that of student affairs practitioners, educators wishing to collaborate must address this barrier. Kate exclaimed, “it’s really important for academic affairs staff and student affairs staff to kind of speak a common language.” Kate proceeded to share a story regarding faculty training. In a recent FYE training opportunity, she had a conversation with a faculty member pertaining to student grading. The faculty member suggested if a student is failing a course then perhaps faculty should encourage the student to drop the course. However, while faculty may think this is helpful to the student, Kate pointed out other considerations. She explained:

That shouldn’t be just the go-to answer because sometimes faculty forget there’s all these other things that influence a student being in school. So, if you drop a class, how does that effect your financial aid? Will it make you go under full-time status? What happens with Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) . . . so that is a great example of the academic side of the house not understanding some of the student service and student affairs side of the house.

Consequently, academic and student affairs disconnections and associated language barriers can impede serving students, as well as relationship building among professionals on campus. If not addressed, these barriers subsequently hinder the development of trust, a factor necessary for participants in their collaborative experiences.

Relationship building and subsequent development of trust between colleagues was a significant piece of the collaborative process for participants. Involved with FYE for approximately seven years, Albert built a variety of relationships across campus for the delivery of first-year seminar courses (FYS). Working collaboratively over an extended period, Albert developed trust between other professionals, believing steadfastly in their expertise and knowledge as he affirmed, “they know what they’re doing.” He made it clear that having the opportunity to work together over time allowed for the development of these relationships and ensuing trust. As a result, Albert is confident in the experiences gained by students enrolled in collaborative courses offered within FYE and is excited to be included in such endeavors.

While trusting knowledge and expertise was important, trusting colleagues’ commitment to the collaboration was equally significant. Jessica shared a story regarding an external collaboration with a community partner. While working together on a conference, Jessica felt the external partner was not invested or committed to the project. She noted that there were several times when work was not completed by agreed upon dates and, more frustrating, at times, meetings were missed all together. Jessica believed the external partner “didn’t have the same buy-in that we did, and so I think that’s an example of a bad collaboration.” Todd Allen echoed these sentiments by implying that while collaboration means working together toward a common goal, individuals must “make that commitment and support each other to make that [goal] happen.” Remarkably, while features of the collaborative process such as relationship building,

commitment, and trust were identified as critical components of collaboration, they were also associated with elements of successful collaborations for participants involved in this inquiry.

### **Successful Collaboration**

While success can be measured in a variety of ways (e.g., retention and graduation rates), I wanted to know what successful collaborations looked like for these mid-level professionals. Discussing elements of successful collaborations, many participants believed the outcome of reaching an established goal was essential. However, because different collaborations have distinctive purposes and goals, success is not specific to one feature. Kate explained, “for me, a successful collaboration depends on the intent and purpose [of] whatever it is we’re collaborating on.”

There may be times when outcomes and success are measured by numbers while other times measured by increased knowledge and understanding. For example, collaboration may be necessary to develop and implement a campus event. In such a case, attendance is important because higher numbers of students translate to more students connecting with faculty and staff on campus, which often is part of the goal of a collaborative effort. However, Kate contended:

Success doesn’t always have to mean high numbers. It could be 10 people came to a program or an event, but all 10 of those students walked away with an appointment for advising, or connected to a new resource, or came back for another program.

Therefore, while success may be measured by numbers, it was merely a small glimpse of what constitutes successful collaboration for participants.

Another story shared by Kate involved collaboration between two student affairs offices in the design and implementation of a Strengths-Quest training for academic and

student affairs professionals on campus. For this collaboration, Kate believed success depended on what attendees learned from the day-long conference. Gaining a better understanding of their own strengths and then being able to “utilize it within their classroom setting or within advising or career services, whichever office they work” was the key to defining success for Kate in this situation. Hence, for this collaboration success was recognized beyond numbers. Instead, defining success for Kate was the knowledge, understanding, and experience gained by others because of the collaborative effort.

Albert, like all participants in this study, is aware and supportive of student development throughout college students’ tenure. Albert talked about how he believes the goal of higher education should be directed at changing a student. He believes “when students come in to a university, they should come out different. And, they should come out different in various ways, academically and personally.” Involved with FYE for many years, Albert is committed to collaborations aimed at achieving this goal, therefore a component of successful collaboration for him involves “attaining that goal, so seeing that change in the students.” Importantly, while considering outcomes and attaining goals were significant for participants’ perceptions of success, additional components were revealed. Specifically, participants discussed the importance of including dependable and committed professionals, as well as feeling value through the collaborative process as other significant factors relevant to a collaboration’s success.

### **Committed Professionals**

Conversing about what makes collaborations successful, participants mentioned that success involves having, as Jessica said, “the right people” working together in the process. Delving into what participants meant by that term, aspects of communicating

and sharing knowledge, as well as dependability, commitment, and an ability to work together as a team were conveyed. Todd Allen reiterated the importance of sharing through all our interviews. He emphasized without sharing and practicing collectively, collaborations would set up to fail, stating “if you can’t get out of your own way, it’s just a waste of time.” Later in the conversation, Todd Allen added, “if you are feeling like you are the leader of a collaboration, then that’s a mistake in terms of what collaboration truly is.” To be successful, he indicated professionals’ large egos must be put in check to allow emphasis on collectivity.

Communicating and sharing knowledge and expertise was important to Ed as he asserted, “I’m bringing not just my content expertise, but my care for students, and my knowledge of the institution and how the academic side works, that somebody in student services may not understand.” Speaking with Aurora, she also emphasized the importance of sharing expertise when she mentioned that part of a successful collaboration involves “playing to people’s strengths and leveraging each other in a way that produces the best outcome.” As such, participants in this study acknowledged that sharing insight while supporting each other through the collaborative process is essential for successful collaborations.

Capacity for trust, dependability, and commitment were additional contributors to successful collaborations described by participants. While these characteristics were associated with what collaboration means to participants, they were also attributed to perceptions of successful collaborations. As an example, Jessica’s story of working with an external partner who did not demonstrate commitment to the collaborative goal and process comes to mind. Sharing this story, Jessica expressed that not being able to rely on

those she collaborates with contributes to negative feelings and results in perceptions of unsuccessful collaborations. Frank shared similar feelings while discussing a “collaborative façade.”

A collaborative façade, in this case, referred to a true sense of commitment from those working together collaboratively. According to Frank, a collaborative façade involves “folks who say they’re on board and then sort of aren’t there the day of, or whatever it is.” Delving further, Frank shared a story of collaborating on a large campus event for fall semester. While working collectively to plan the event, Frank indicated that everyone involved voiced numerous opinions. Specifically, opinions regarding how the event should be run, how it should look, and how faculty and staff should be involved were debated extensively. Yet, when the day of the event arrived, many of those same people were not present, nor were they present afterward when debriefing occurred. Frank asserted, “to influence the vision of a thing without the execution is not collaboration.” Subsequently, dependability, commitment, and reliability of those involved in the collaborative effort influence perceptions of success.

Feeling supported while collaborating was also important regarding success. Explaining how his current collaborations operate, Albert declared, “I feel supported because I feel like I’m a member of a team.” Understanding he is part of something bigger when collaborating, Albert acknowledged that support gained from working collectively accomplishes more than he could do by himself. Jessica also mentioned support when discussing elements of successful collaboration. Referring to support from professionals with whom she collaborates, Jessica explained, “[support] comes in different forms and from different angles,” meaning her immediate supervisor, and



higher-level administrators and/or institutional leaders. For Jessica, support needs to come from all levels of the institution to be considered successful.

Lastly, sentiments regarding working with a good team were expressed by participants when they described successful collaboration. Conversing with Jessica about a successful collaboration she was involved with previously, she stated, “I had a pretty good situation in terms of collaboration [because] our team worked really well together [and] we worked well with others on campus.” When discussing successful collaborations on campus with Todd Allen, he acknowledged that his office has been able to accomplish positive outcomes “because an amazing team exists here.” Aurora also discussed the significance of having a good team when she stated, “I have a really great small team and they’re so collaborative, and I often hear comments about, this is a really high functioning team.” Hence, these stories and sentiments reveal, for participants, working with dedicated and committed professionals is imperative for collaboration and its potential success. Moreover, a sense of feeling valued by the team and beyond was intertwined with their perceptions of successful collaborations.

### **Feeling Valued**

Feeling valued in the collaborative process, as well as feeling valued professionally, influences participants perceptions of successful collaboration. Regarding feelings of value during the collaborative process, Frank articulated:

One thing that I think really influences the success of a collaboration is who’s facilitating that space for that collaboration. Do they truly value the input of the people at the table? Do the people at the table truly value their input into that project? So, it’s reciprocal in nature, and both of these pieces have to give effort toward the thing for it to really work.

Value, discussed in context of the collaborative process, was also noted by Jessica in one of our interviews. As we spoke, Jessica articulated that for her, an element of sacrifice is important during collaboration. She explained there are times when a collaborator may be struggling with obtaining resources such as money, people, and/or time and believes that if “a sacrifice can be made on the part of my collaborator, I think that adds to the support [of collaboration].” Conveying a story involving shared resources in a current collaboration, Jessica believes sacrifice strengthens relationships and admitted that she is “now willing to give a little bit more because of that.”

Feeling valued in the process was also expressed when participants emphasized the importance of being involved in conversations from the onset of the collaborative process. Aurora stated:

Early input or solicitation for input is key. I think often times, at least at my level and then my team’s level, sometimes it feels like upper administration is pushing down an initiative, a project, without that early input . . . and then you’re asked to put legs to whatever it is when you don’t have the information you need to know . . . the why . . . I think it’s important to convey the why, and when people understand the why, and if they can get behind the why, we’re going to have a greater investment in the outcome.

Frank echoed this sentiment explaining, “when that [conversation] happens at the very beginning, I think collaboration is more likely to flourish.” Further focusing on the importance of early involvement, Frank stated:

Invite everyone to the table to say where do you see potential, or have you seen or experienced good collaborations on this campus . . . if we were able to make some of those changes that allow us to fortify those collaborations, I think people would be more invested in them and come to work because they want to, and do that work because they want to, and they see a fit. They aren’t some sort of forced puzzle-pieces.

Thus, inclusion from the onset of a collaborative process demonstrates value in professionals and their respective talents, and as Aurora highlighted, “people want to feel valued in their work.”

Value of staff and faculty was also discussed in terms of transmission of information. Specifically, presentation of data and current research on collaboration was conveyed as being met with resistance, thus creating feelings of being under-valued.

Referring to meetings regarding collaboration, Frank described:

I come with big plans because I feel like our institution is light years behind . . . [and] it's not met very well . . . and I think the solution has been to further fortify and build a façade of whatever we're supposed to be, instead of acknowledging where we've fallen short.

However, Frank added, “reviewing data together, sharing data together, and then having conversations for next year based on that data . . . about what things need to look like” is essential for growth. As such, failure to acknowledge and examine all information encompassing collaboration was interpreted as devaluing professional expertise, resulting in decreased professional satisfaction.

Feeling valued professionally also influenced perceptions of success for participants in this inquiry. While discussing elements of successful collaboration with Albert, he mentioned two things influencing success. Initially, he described attainment of the goal, which was mentioned earlier in this discourse. Secondly, however, he described how feelings of professional satisfaction resulting from the collaborative effort are also substantial. Further discussing the topic, Albert indicated that “as a professional, this [collaboration] feels really good.” He went on to say:

I get to feel good going home. I get to sit back and say I'm making a contribution that I could not have made by myself. So, I feel like I'm doing a better job than I

would have otherwise . . . so when somebody say's how's your job, I'm like, man it's wonderful . . . it's like I can't wait until next fall because I want to try this again.

Lastly, feeling valued professionally involves finding meaning in the work. As

Aurora declared:

I don't know that I, or anyone, can sustain a job for this long if you didn't have that genuine desire to collaborate for the purpose of making it work for students . . . I do think [collaboration] has to be something that is meaningful to that core group of people who identify the issue and who want to work toward addressing whatever it is.

Successful collaborations were thus perceived in numerous ways by participants involved in this study. As such, describing how participants make meaning of collaboration, success depends on working with committed professionals and feeling value of both work and self. However, while feeling valued was considered a component of success, it also contributes to benefits of collaboration.

### **Benefits of Collaboration**

Collaborative programming enhances student learning because of its holistic approach to education (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh et al., 2005; Yaun et al., 2018). Specifically, collaborative programming between academic and student affairs educators is intended to serve students by creating more meaningful educational experiences, thus enriching the college experience (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Crafts et al., 2001; Feldman Barr, 2013; Gulley & Mullendore, 2014; Yaun et al., 2018). Notably, for participants in this inquiry, while improving a student's college experience helps guide collaborative initiatives, it was also considered a benefit of collaboration.

Since participants are student-centered and in-tune with college student development, benefits of collaboration to them, including increased student growth and development, was of great significance. Participants believe their collaborations create more meaningful experiences for students by encouraging involvement beyond the classroom setting, thus establishing a greater sense of community of peers, faculty, and staff. Conveying the goal of higher education is to help students grow and become different people, participants believe their collaborations on campus contribute to student learning and development.

### **Student Growth and Development**

Participants in this inquiry trust that academic and student affairs collaborations benefit holistic student development, subsequently enriching the college experience. Speaking with Ed about how his collaborations with FYE influence a student's college experience at Mountain University, he stated, "I think the first-year seminar, by requiring extra-curricular activities [and] by requiring the use of campus resources, helps students have a richer experience." Demonstrating a commitment to student development in college, Ed went on to say, "[and] I enjoy being able to do just that . . . seeing people grow and get strong, helping people maneuver and become successful." Albert echoed the importance of student growth and development emphasizing the goal of higher education is to develop students into more mindful and responsible human beings.

Believing the college experience should be meaningful and change a student, Albert asserted "college doesn't have to be going to lectures and spitting back information and being passive . . . I want students to have a life-changing event." Understanding the importance of engagement outside of the classroom environment,

Albert highlighted that collaborations are bigger than a single person as he acknowledged, “the first-year seminar is doing more than I could do by myself.”

Interestingly, Albert compared working collaboratively to playing in a band.

Describing this metaphor, Albert expressed that students represent the audience, and, as a band, “we want to create an experience for them.” Understanding that he cannot play the entire orchestra, Albert explained working collaboratively provides a rhythm section, subsequently strengthening the experience, which in the case of higher education is increased student growth and development. Todd Allen also discussed how collaborations contribute to student growth and development. Believing a student should evolve through their college experience and emphasizing that higher education “provides a developmental process that has been proven [to] create a completely different person in the end,” Todd Allen noted the significance of holistic education. Highlighting that students “are just young professionals that need your mentorship so that they can understand how they connect that academic experience to the real world of work,” Todd Allen asserted the importance of facilitating student growth through the college experience.

Assisting with student growth, mentorships develop in numerous ways on this campus. Working collaboratively provides students opportunities to learn from faculty, staff, peers, and external professionals, thus setting the stage for development of student-mentor relationships. Within Mountain University’s FYE program, trained student mentors support faculty and contribute to student learning and development. Frank described student mentors serving as buffers between first-year students and faculty. Acting as a bridge between students and faculty, student mentors in FYE were described

as, “that buffer where you can ask the questions you might be afraid to ask your faculty member.” As such, student mentors support first-year students in ways faculty and/or staff cannot.

Additionally, Frank explained that student mentors within FYE “encourage those first-year students to see their college experience as not limited to the classroom,” thus encouraging engagement on campus. Echoing this sentiment, Jessica shared feedback given by a first-generation student regarding student mentors. Jessica was told “I wouldn’t have gotten involved if it wasn’t for my [mentor], I would have probably just gone from the parking lot to class, to the parking lot, and then home.” Increased campus engagement such as this was described as creating a sense of community and support, thus enriching the college experience for students. Ed emphasized that because of FYE “we’ve accomplished much more of a campus community . . . [previously] nobody was thinking about that student experience and that connection, [now] you see a lot more of that.” Importantly, if not for academic and student affairs collaborations within FYE, student engagement may not be as prominent at Mountain University due to the sizable number of commuter-students enrolled. Moreover, beyond student growth and development, benefits of collaboration were also described in terms of professional growth and development.

### **Professional Growth and Development**

Discussing benefits of collaboration, participants mentioned personal and professional growth that transpired through working collaboratively. Initially, participants acknowledged working with other professionals across the institution helped increase their own understanding of other resources on campus. Ed admitted that faculty are “quite

insulated from the rest of student services . . . so it's interesting to see how much is available and what they [student affairs educators] provide." Similarly, Kate explained:

Collaborations, in my experiences, have helped connect me to campus resources and also help connect me to people on campus, which I think is really important. I think networking is important for your own self and for your professional growth.

Jessica also discussed learning about other roles and responsibilities on campus.

During our conversation she noted, "I've had to learn how to work with pockets of the university that work differently than our pocket does . . . and not only learn to tolerate it, but to actually appreciate it." Albert shared similar sentiments when he stated, "I'm aware of various resources on campus [and] I'm more aware of it now because of the first-year seminar." Yet, while participants acknowledged collaborations helped increase understanding of different roles on campus, they also recognized collaboration's influence in other areas of their personal and professional growth.

Conversing with Aurora, she explained that it is important for work to align with her core values. Acknowledging collaboration underscores that premise, she stated, "if I didn't have people, partners I can collaborate with, I couldn't do my work, so it's a necessary part of finding workplace fulfillment and that is intrinsically tied to my personal happiness." Personal happiness and subsequent job satisfaction was mentioned by Jessica as well. Discussing the topic, she highlighted:

Day to day my job satisfaction is high, meaning I'm very satisfied because in my unit I have a team that is excellent, that I love working with, and that helps me grow and learn and thrive as a person.

Albert also remarked on personal and professional satisfaction gained from his collaborative work. Specifically, he expressed, "I can't wait until next fall because I want



to try this again.” Additionally, while personal and professional satisfaction was noted, increased understanding of self was also described by participants.

Aurora considered how working collaboratively helped increase her understanding of people and the different approaches they take to work. More importantly, she learned not to internalize issues when she explained, “learning people’s preferences [and] communication styles, and understanding that they’re all likely coming from a good place, it is just expressed differently, understanding that not to internalize any of that is really key.” Aurora went on to explain she has grown personally and professionally because of working collaboratively, even when collaborations were difficult. She stated, “I feel like I’ve had a lot of those opportunities [even] if they come in a not so ideal setting or way, I’ve learned from those too [and] seeing those as learning opportunities has been really positive.”

Expressing passionate beliefs about benefits of collaboration, Todd Allen stated:

For me, personally and professionally, I think it has changed the way I approach every situation, even family. I walk into a space and I’m not immediately saying this is what I’m going to do . . . it’s what do we want to do.

Todd Allen explained because of working collaboratively through his career, he learned to “let go of a lot of stuff” because he no longer feels the need to have complete ownership. Continuing, he stated, “not spending time on just one thing I’m able to do so many different things and try so many different things, and I get to benefit by the learning.” Thus, learning more about other professionals on campus, as well as gaining insight of one’s self, contribute to job satisfaction and were considered personal and professional benefits of collaboration. Moreover, benefits of collaboration specific to the institution were also mentioned by participants.

## **Institutional Benefits**

Institutional benefits of collaboration discussed by participants included increased student/faculty/staff retention, increased institutional credibility, and increased institutional competitiveness. According to Kate, academic and student affairs collaborations are designed to connect students to academic and student affairs professionals on campus. Creating these connections, she stated, “the institution benefits because those students are more likely to persist so that increases retention rate, that increases our enrollment, it increases our persistence to graduation, which are all things judged on by their Board of Regents.”

Jessica shared similar sentiments regarding increased student retention resulting from collaborations on the Mountain University campus. While she admitted that she could not recall specific retention data, Jessica exclaimed, “I’ve seen the retention for students who take a first-year experience course and for students who don’t. I don’t know what the number is, I apologize, but it’s higher.” Similarly, Frank added more depth:

When I’m seeing better retention rates, it’s never a surprise to me and it’s usually because there was a good match between [student] mentor and faculty . . . when you create that space with those two individuals, we tend to see higher retention rates.

In addition to increased student retention, faculty and staff retention is also influenced by collaboration. Kate outlined:

In terms of a more holistic benefit, I think, why wouldn’t you want your staff and faculty to be connected and engaged to the place in which they’re employed . . . I want to be informed about the place in which I work, and I want to know people and information and have access to things that will help me do a better job, that will make my job more enjoyable for me.

Also “feeling good and rejuvenated in the work,” Aurora discussed how the Mountain University campus is considered a collaborative environment by others. She stated, “there

are people on my team who have come from other areas and they say this is a much better environment, a more collaborative environment, and I didn't see that at my prior schools." Aurora emphasized that her collaborations and relationships with team members positively influences work satisfaction and thus increases staff retention.

Another institutional benefit of collaboration is increased credibility. Involved with FYE for a number of years, Frank stated:

Because of our collaborations with the first-year experiences, our mentor program has a reputation. A positive reputation of having students that are universally purposeful and important . . . so there is this sort of assumed credibility with it, and as a result, I think the institution sees peer-to-peer engagement adding value in that regard.

Lastly, collaborations contribute to institutional competitiveness. Working with experiential learning collaborations, Todd Allen discussed the importance of collaborating with internal and external partners. Explaining that connecting the institution with external employers creates opportunities for students and helps make Mountain University more competitive, Todd Allen asserted, "if I wasn't working to collaborate with these folks then I don't think we would be able to compete." Discussing these collaborations, he added:

We all have to do this, it's a skill-set that's necessary, it's work that has to be done and I think if I wasn't doing it, then we wouldn't be able to be competitive and that student experience would completely fail.

Hence, while benefitting the institution in various ways, as a whole, collaboration contributes to holistic student learning and development. However, while benefits of collaboration were described in terms of student, professional, and institutional gains, various factors influence development and sustainability of such efforts on campus.

### **Influences on Collaboration**

Delving further into collaborations on the Mountain University campus, participants discussed several influences regarding such initiatives. Whether affecting collaborations positively or negatively, influences including leadership, professional divides, and resources were highlighted. Overall, participants said their collaborations within FYE and Experiential Learning were positive experiences, however challenges along the way were noted.

Leadership was mentioned by all participants when asked about influences on collaboration. Concerning leadership, participants discussed the importance of leaders exhibiting commitment and support of collaboration on campus. According to Aurora, “it starts with leadership being able to see that there’s a dotted line around the box and collaboration has to happen.” Importantly, while some participants described positive experiences with senior administrators/leaders on the Mountain University campus, others voiced frustration.

#### **Leadership**

Leadership sets the tone and culture for the development and sustainability of collaborative initiatives on campus. According to participants, commitment and support from senior administrators is essential for collaboration. Reflecting on his experiences, Ed discussed how institutional leadership led to the creation of FYE. When FYE originated, institutional leaders sought to improve the undergraduate experience at Mountain University. University senior leaders wanted to create an identity and sense of community for students, thus enriching their college experience. Because of commitment and support from these leaders, FYE was developed and has continued to grow over the

years. Albert expressed, “it’s growing in ways that are really healthy and I think part of that is truly visionary leadership.” As such, support from senior administrators/leaders influences development and sustainability of collaborative endeavors.

Notably, while university leaders drive collaborations, support from immediate supervisors was also significant. Regarding her supervisor, Kate said, “[my supervisor] asks questions and provides critical feedback and positive feedback, and has been so supportive . . . he definitely does not micro-manage.” Todd Allen echoed a similar sentiment. Describing his supervisor as “very hands-off”, Todd Allen expressed positive feelings regarding support he receives involving his collaborations. Even when faced with challenging situations, Todd Allen asserted, “[university leaders] really helped me define what my strengths are.” Similarly expressing positive feelings regarding supervisor support, Albert stated, “I have a department chair who’s supportive, so he let’s me do this [collaboration] while other chairs may not.”

Support from university leaders was also important to Jessica. Sharing experiences on the subject, Jessica acknowledged support from many places. Describing her supervisor, she initially commented, “I needed support from [immediate supervisor] to figure out how things work.” However, aside from immediate supervisor and/or departmental support, Jessica expressed that senior administrator support is crucial to the collaborative process. Unfortunately, she believes this type of support has been lacking regarding her collaborative experiences at Mountain University. According to Jessica:

We are lacking support from student affairs leadership and people six pay-grades above me have no idea what I do, yet we have a huge impact on retention here and I think that’s unacceptable. From the flip-side, there’s good support from [immediate supervisors], but I think we’re lacking some support from the student affairs department as a whole. On our end, I think that collaboration could be better if we had better support from student affairs leadership.

Also expressing frustration with student affairs leadership at Mountain University, Frank emphasized senior administrators' focus more on enrollment, "even though they know that retention is a problem." Expanding, Frank declared, "I think it's about money . . . the institution is largely focused on the bottom line, so there's this huge emphasis on enrollment." Statements like this emphasized disconnections between senior and mid-level administrators and dissatisfaction was apparent as we discussed the topic. Along with expressions of frustration, participants voiced such disconnections create challenges to establishing collaborations on campus, particularly regarding limited resources.

Further considering senior and mid-level disconnections on campus, Jessica discussed how the "student affairs department has a 100% graduation rate goal [which is] wildly unrealistic." As such, higher education professionals are forced to "operate in the sphere of influence that [they] have" to reach these goals, increasing division among themselves. Aurora emphasized:

The tenor of upper administration really does dictate the feel of the service we are delivering, but it doesn't change our office or our unit's mission . . . I am often having conversations with my team about how do we do workplace and life integration and also meet upper administration's demand for x, y, or z.

Consequently, different agendas and goals among senior and mid-level administrators contribute to professional divides which hinder academic and student affairs collaboration.

### **Professional Divides**

While university leaders help launch collaborations on campus, professional divides influencing these initiatives were continually described by participants. Divides among academic and student affairs educators were discussed and participant stories

support previous literature on the subject. Historically, due in part to decreased understanding of each other's roles on campus, differences in professional cultures within higher education impede academic and student affairs collaborations (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Frost et al., 2010; Kezar, 2001a; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Philpott & Strange, 2003). Participants discussed challenges faced while trying to form such partnerships at Mountain University, thus supporting the literature.

Due to limited understanding of different responsibilities on campus, initiating academic and student affairs collaborations is difficult. While admittedly knowing it is not true, Albert noted, "professors are often so insulated that anything that's not class [classroom time] is not academics." Relating the story of how FYE began on campus, Ed declared:

I knew faculty teaching a course would maintain the academic integrity of it for us. The sell was convincing [faculty] to add the student engagement, as well as study skills, reading, and library literacy. All those things that go into a first-year seminar course if you were from the student affairs side.

Faculty disconnections were reiterated by Todd Allen as he stated:

I think our biggest challenge is collaboration with faculty. We have some great collaborators in general . . . [however] those that are the biggest challenges are those that don't see the value of collaboration and don't feel the services we offer are important.

Accordingly, limited understanding of benefits outside the classroom environment make initiation of academic and student affairs collaborations challenging.

Since limited understanding of professional roles exists, Ed explained how faculty support and a sense of "buy-in" from faculty is imperative for the implementation of collaborative programming. He explained because FYE began on the "academic side . . . it had a lot of academic buy-in from the beginning." In existence now for approximately

10 years, collaborations within FYE are viewed positively due to this sense of acceptance and subsequent support. Frank described, “back in the day, when we first started, I really had to sell it to faculty . . . and now it’s just sort of a trusted, credible thing that exists.” Jessica also conveyed that while initiating academic and student affairs collaborations was challenging at first, it is now easier because of increased understanding and support from those involved.

Further discussing differences between academic and student affairs professionals, Frank claimed:

It’s challenging because, as I understand, not a lot of faculty are taught how to teach. So, for us to go in and say here’s some good pedagogy that you might consider, outside of FYE, I don’t think that exists, but inside of FYE we can have those conversations [because] there’s some trust there.

Importantly, since FYE has existed for so long at Mountain University, Kate indicated professionals involved in those collaborations “understand the importance of both academic and social integration” and are excited to participate in such collaborative initiatives across campus.

Professional divides were expressed in many fashions by participants. Terms such as “this side of the house” or “their side of the house” were used continually throughout conversations. Professional separations were even reflected in metaphors chosen by participants. While metaphors reflect working together toward a common goal, issues of division were noted in almost every example. Using an apple tree as a metaphor for collaboration, Ed described the tree trunk symbolizing the academic component of FYE, whereas the apples represented student affairs services. He proclaimed:

I think student services have all these wonderful fruits out there . . . and the students are the ones out there picking the apples. That’s sort of the structure of



our first-year seminar. The first-year seminar class is the tree and the student services are the apples, and then our students are down below, picking the apples they think are the tastiest.

While Ed emphasized that everything is “in play together, [but] there’s still different functions and different purposes,” elements of separation were revealed. Separation in this metaphor was thusly illustrated with academics seen at the center of collaboration.

Separation was also noted in Albert’s metaphor of collaboration when he described it as playing in a band. Albert discussed the goal is to play together to create an experience for the audience, although he is only “a side man.” As he expressed being part of a larger orchestra, Albert’s metaphor reflected separation among collaborators with each playing their own part during the process. Jessica’s metaphor regarding building a bridge had similar connotations. Jessica exclaimed:

We’re starting to build the bridge on our side of the river, and the collaborator on the other side of the river is starting to build their part of the bridge as well . . . that’s how I see it, two separate groups who are working toward the same vision and mission.

Correspondingly, Todd Allen’s metaphor of climbing a mountain suggested separation among collaborators. He described that although the goal is to reach the top, people take separate paths up the mountain, thus again signifying separation. Hence, while metaphors for collaboration illustrate working toward a common goal, division and separation was reflected within each story.

Beyond academic and student affairs disconnections, participants discussed disconnections within campus offices. Specifically, experiences regarding divides among student affairs professionals at Mountain University were shared. Student affairs participants revealed they are met with resistance when presenting research to senior student affairs administrators. Kate stated, “I know people in student affairs at this

institution that do a lot of cool research, but because it doesn't fall within their realm, they're not rewarded or recognized for it." Interestingly, Frank noted while being "data driven . . . helps us build that trust with academic affairs," it does not translate in the same manner for student affairs.

Described as "spirit squashing," Aurora shared supervisors' opinions about attending meetings regarding academic and student affairs collaborations stating, "I hear from our supervisors this is not a student affairs thing to do . . . we're not faculty." Indicating frustration, Aurora continued, "I often feel like I'm having to justify why things are important, so I feel like I have to make a case for why [things] are needed." Echoing this sentiment when discussing a collaborative façade, Frank also described how things need to be explained and justified to senior administrators. Disappointingly, Frank declared, "the lack of awareness and interest in why we're spending the time on things that I'm pretty sure are supposed to be important to them . . . that indifference is harmful." Accordingly, such disconnection within student affairs impedes collaboration and contributes to frustration among student affairs educators on campus.

Lastly, physical location of offices on the Mountain University campus contributes to perceptions of disconnection. Across this urban campus, academic and student affairs units are separated, sometimes limiting interactions between fellow collaborators. Since personal interactions contribute to relationship building, physical separation among collaborators was described as interfering with that process. As Albert suggested, "if we were all in the same suite of offices, like the first-year seminar suite and the first-year experiences suite, I think there would be chances for some more informal [conversation] that would happen." Similarly aware that physical separation can hamper

collaboration, Kate noted, “I don’t stay in my office all of the time and when I have meetings I often prefer to go to their location to be out and about . . . and [potentially] interacting with students.” Discussing physical space with Todd Allen, he asserted collaboration “opens doors” and “creates opportunities for more conversation,” therefore, collaborators must be willing to travel across campus to “see what the opportunities are.”

While physical separation between collaborators was noted, physical separation between senior and mid-level professionals was also discussed. Jessica explained since Mountain University is an urban campus, “we are always struggling for space.” She went on to say:

Space plays a role in a lot of those politics that I’ve hopefully not just been alluding to, but been more open about. There is like a physical line between upper administration and the rest of the crew . . . I’ve heard of those offices referred to as the Ivory Tower.

Referring to these senior-level administrative offices, Jessica described “a different culture over there.” Expanding, she explained differences are so drastic that when attending meetings in those administrative spaces, she and her colleagues wear “different outfits when we go [there] . . . because it’s more corporate.” Further describing the space, Frank added, “sometimes I’ll find myself in meetings at the Ivory Tower and I’ll look out the window, across campus, and just think about that disconnection.” Relating this disconnection to collaboration, Jessica expressed, “I think that it’s a negative influence in a sense that if there wasn’t that physical separation, there may be more of an inclination to collaborate.” As such, disconnections on campus were considered a hindrance to academic and student affairs collaborations at Mountain University. Importantly, this finding was further supported regarding allocation of resources toward such endeavors.

## Resources

Dictated by senior administrator support, resources including money, personnel, and time were also considered influences on collaboration. Notably, feeling supported by senior administration was described as positively influencing the allocation of resources whereas decreased support was portrayed in a negative manner. Regarding senior student affairs administrators at Mountain University, Frank declared, “they say to bridge the gap between us and academic affairs, but no one actually provides the resources for us to bridge that gap.” The development of one-credit hour College Success (UNIV) courses utilized within FYE serve as an example.

Frank noted, since UNIV courses are “designed for those students who might just want to focus on the skills component . . . time management, study skills, and survival in college,” a proposal was made for student affairs educators to instruct those courses. Due to their area of expertise, it was contended that student affairs educators are more than qualified and should be encouraged to teach UNIV courses. Including student affairs educators in this manner provides a way to bridge the gap between academic and student affairs. Conveyed with apparent frustration, Frank lamented:

We got hung up right away on some HR policy and whether or not student affairs people could, as part of their job, teach one of these courses, and basically arrived at, no, at least not for pay . . . it became quickly discouraging for folks because FYE planned to pay these people and student affairs is just putting a quick stop sign on that.

Nevertheless, at the time, conversations about using student affairs educators to instruct UNIV courses continued and suggestions of using vacation time or time over the lunch hour were deliberated. Because FYE was willing to compensate educators out of its budget, student affairs senior administrators and human resources personnel eventually

agreed professional development funds could be provided to compensate student affairs educators wishing to teach. However, Frank emphasized:

It makes me uncomfortable that we're making it this hard for student affairs to be involved with academic affairs in this way . . . they're finally willing to trust our expertise in this one area and we're making it nearly impossible to do, unless you work extra.

Lack of compensation was also noted within the realm of academic affairs.

Discussing compensation for collaboration from a faculty perspective, Albert shared:

When I first co-taught the teaching skills seminar [with another faculty member], we each made half because there was no way for two people to be in the same room, at the same time, and get paid . . . so there's no monetary incentive [to collaborate].

Instead, the incentive relates to teaching, which not all faculty prioritize through their practice. For example, faculty engaged in research often prioritize research endeavors over teaching. However, Ed described that faculty involved with FYE tend to prioritize instruction and “now have to demonstrate why [they] want to be in it, so it's elite, it's a privilege to be part of the group.” Regarding faculty compensation from the FYE budget, Kate explained faculty are considered contracted employees thus “they are teaching an [FYE] course in place of another course.” As such, “they're not getting extra” compensation to engage in such collaborations. Rather, “part of their contracted money is coming from us as opposed to their department.”

Intrinsically, support and subsequent allocation of resources from senior administrators is crucial for collaboration. While talking about collaboration may be virtuous, acting in ways that assist collaboration is essential for such endeavors to occur. Frank voiced:

I think it's very much in line with this trend that the institution says something is important to them, but they're not walking the walk. You say bridging the gap

between student and academic affairs is important to you and we present an opportunity to build that and to fortify that and we're not able to see it through. You say student retention is important to you, so we present trends and potential tools and resources to strengthen that, to improve the student retention rate, and we don't see any investment in those findings.

Notably, describing senior student affairs administrators as “not walking the walk” was conveyed by other participants throughout this study. Respectively, some participants expressed feelings of frustration attempting to engage in such collaboration at Mountain University. Further regarding student affairs senior leaders, Frank added, “I think they're seeing it wrong. They're investing in outcomes, or perceived outcomes, and not people.” Importantly, while senior administrator support influences the development of collaborations on campus, it correspondingly influences sustainability of such programs at Mountain University.

### **Creating Sustainable Collaboration**

The importance of senior administrator support regarding development and sustainability of collaborative programming cannot be overemphasized. Without such support, higher education professionals wishing to collaborate face increased challenges with such endeavors. Participants noted while benefits of academic and student affairs collaboration (e.g., increased student and professional development, and improved institutional reputation) are apparent, senior administrators do not always focus on that information. Instead, they focus on numbers and outcomes, as Jessica stated, “every time I hear from student affairs leadership . . . it's like a factory model more than it is a holistic student experience model. It's 100% graduation, and I don't know what to do with that.” Albert agreed saying, “I think it's a really important point because administrators deal with numbers and we all deal with students.”

Echoing these sentiments during our focus group interview, participants emphasized being concerned only with outcomes and numbers makes higher education operate “as a corporate model.” Consequently, holistic student development is sacrificed. Kate proclaimed at times senior administrators “are just looking at the numbers, and you can see where we have some deficits, but then not really investigating why that is, or how can we work together to help specific [student] populations.” Remaining focused on monetary outcomes also limits future vision and growth of collaboration. According to participants, institutional leaders are “really good at keeping the status quo.” Aurora indicated, “I feel like we keep doing the same thing but expect a different outcome, it’s just not happening and when we propose a different structure or model, it’s shut down immediately.” Thus, according to participants, senior administrators and leaders must shift their thinking to create sustainable collaborative initiatives on campus. Subsequently, the first step involves creating an increased culture of collaboration at Mountain University.

### **Create a Culture of Collaboration**

While Mountain University is beginning to create a culture of collaboration, especially regarding FYE and experiential learning collaborations, work remains to be done. Importantly, participants indicated increased efforts must be taken to lessen professional divides across campus. Since relationship building among professionals builds trust, setting aside time and space for meetings to occur is critical for decreasing such divides. Whereas time and space for collaboration is currently created at individual office levels, Albert emphasized “it’s not systemic yet,” thus hampering some collaborative efforts at Mountain University.

Correspondingly, participants acknowledged how policy contributes to creation of more collaborative cultures on campus. Discussing barriers to collaboration, Frank declared, “some of those barriers are sort of held up by weak things like policy.” Using the example of student affairs educators struggling to be compensated for teaching UNIV courses, Frank emphasized:

So many people in student affairs would love to teach a class for first-year experiences, especially with this new [UNIV] stuff . . . [however] opportunities to teach should never be costing you as a professional. In fact, we should always be giving our professionals opportunities like that, so they can grow.

Thus, Frank added developing “some universal expectations and resources built around the development of our people” needs to be considered as part of establishing a more collaborative culture at the university.

Mandating conditions involved with collaboration was also suggested by participants. Kate discussed the importance of mandating FYE for all incoming first-year students. While the program is suggested highly to new students, they are currently not required to enroll. Referring to disconnections with senior administrators, Kate claimed:

They [senior administrators] could also think more strategically about [how] to get students connected to those opportunities, which we all know leads to persistence and higher GPA’s and that’s what bothers me, we know all this stuff, they know all this stuff, so why isn’t it mandated?

Mandating was also discussed in terms of the collaborative process. Participants indicated collaborative initiatives supported by institutional leaders sometimes meets resistance with other upper-level administrators, thus hampering the process. As such, Kate indicated university leaders must act by mandating aspects of collaboration, rather than allowing things to be “vetoed by Assistant Deans.”



Lastly, addressing physical locations on campus also contributes to creating a culture of collaboration at Mountain University. Regarding physical location of campus offices and corresponding feelings of disconnection with other professionals, Aurora declared, “the physical geography of things does impact my ability to walk up . . . and say hey, let’s take a few minutes, or let’s go for a walk and talk about this.” Instead, conversations often occur electronically in the form of emails, which “could be conveyed in various ways.” Albert also acknowledged more informal “hallway conversations” do not happen frequently enough at Mountain University due to its layout. As a result, feelings of increased professional disconnection resulting from physical separation on campus was noted.

Importantly, aside from professional disconnections, Kate expressed concern about physical location of offices in relation to student traffic. Involved with FYE, Kate declared:

Having me in this building, where [senior-level administrators] are, I do feel like it creates this . . . I don’t want to say division, but this perception of access. I’m going to be teaching a UNIV course in the fall and my students are going to have to come meet with me . . . and I question how welcoming is this space [for] an 18-year-old, first-generation college student.

Echoing a similar sentiment, Jessica explained, “I would try to assuage this idea [of] the Ivory Tower. I don’t know how I would do that, but I think that it does play into the culture.” Thus, intentionally addressing conditions contributing to professional divides on campus may help pave the way for creating an institutional culture which supports academic and student affairs collaboration at Mountain University. Importantly, rewarding faculty and staff appropriately for collaboration was also an important consideration when trying to create sustainable collaborations on campus.

## Reward for Collaboration

Participants indicated reward for collaboration needs to be considered when trying to create sustainable collaborations on campus. While understanding budget constraints within higher education, Ed maintained specially funding “initiatives that rewarded collaborative behavior” would assist with such endeavors. He emphasized:

You can fund things short-term, but do you have the will to institutionalize it, to provide those real dollars and the staff support to make it work well, and often times, at least at this school because we are so cash-starved, where’s there’s such a competing demand for things, we get a lot of good ideas dry on the vine.

Thus, administrator support involving reward for collaboration influences sustainability of collaboration.

Ed also highlighted the importance of “supporting collaboration in a more open and transparent way [because] it seems like these initiatives get co-opted by favorite sons.” Jessica mentioned the importance of transparency with budget as well. She stated:

It feels like we never know what’s going on, ever . . . and that causes like, well I don’t know if these resources are going to be taken away, so I’ll hold them closer just in case. If we knew what was going on, we wouldn’t do that.

Transparency was also discussed in terms of working together collaboratively. Todd Allen stressed it is critical to “get people on the same page about what we are doing [otherwise] nobody knows where it lives and nobody wants to be accountable for it.”

Albert indicated rewarding collaboration in more meaningful ways would also be beneficial to creating sustainable collaborations at Mountain University. He described past experiences where senior administrators would try to show gratitude by providing

end of the year award ceremonies. However, these ceremonies were viewed as meaningless. Albert explained:

It was like, look, we're being good to faculty, you know, no raises, no space, no time, no infrastructure of any kind, but look, you got Swedish Meatballs, so you really can't complain. So, I think there's issues about the systemic culturally consistent methods of expressing gratitude.

As such, action taken by senior leaders concerning reward for collaboration underscores the ability to create sustainable collaborations across campus. Without senior-level support, collaboration is difficult to sustain and holistic student learning and development becomes compromised.

### **Understanding Collaboration**

Mountain University educators participating in this inquiry stressed the importance of shared values, ideas, and knowledge through the collaborative process. Participants indicated that working together in this manner builds relationships and subsequent trust with collaborative partners, both essential elements of collaboration. As such, professional connections are significant to the collaborative process. Currently at Mountain University however, Albert described professional connections as happening “in pockets . . . but [are] not systemic yet.” This finding echoes previous literature regarding professional disconnections within higher education, indicating separation between academic and student affairs educators has been noted for years (Gulley & Mullendore, 2014; Hirsch & Burack, 2002; Whitt, 2011).

While research demonstrates increased student success is related to academic and student affairs collaboration (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh et al., 2005; Yaun et al., 2018), professional divisions continue to make such endeavors challenging. Professional disconnections and subsequent divisions between academic and

student affairs educators arise from limited knowledge and understanding of each other's roles on campus (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Philpott & Strange, 2003; Whitt, 2011). Consequently, lacking such understanding contributes to divisions and silos existing on campus, insulating professionals in the process. Accordingly, relationship building between academic and student affairs educators becomes hindered and collaboration becomes more difficult. As divisions between academic and student affairs educators endure within higher education, senior administrator support is crucial for fostering professional connection and engagement on campus. Without such support, sustainability and growth of academic and student affairs collaborations can fail.

As participants highlighted the importance of support from peers and immediate supervisors, they emphasized senior administrator support is critical to a collaboration's development and sustainability. A presence of senior administrator support lends to a sense of acceptance regarding collaboration, helping connect professionals across campus and propelling academic and student affairs partnerships forward (Crafts et al., 2001; Fenneberg & Hancock, 2018; Fuller & Haugabrook, 2001; Kezar, 2001a; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Philpott & Strange, 2003; Slantcheva-Durst, 2014). A sense of acceptance was noted in this study as well, specifically regarding FYE. Participants recognized acceptance created initially by Mountain University leaders helped connect professionals on campus and assisted with relationship building imperative to collaborative processes. As a result, FYE was developed and has become instrumental to numerous students' college experience at Mountain University.

While creating a sense of acceptance is important, participants discussed additional qualities required by university leaders wishing to develop and strengthen

collaboration on campus. Albert suggested, “visionary leadership” and the need for a “more general [organizational] re-design” is required to move academic and student affairs collaboration forward. Within this context, visionary leadership is synonymous with transformational leadership, and thus focused on organizational change.

Transformational leaders strive to change an organization while also attending to its member’s needs (Burns, 1978; Northouse, 2013). As such, transformational leaders seek to move away from status-quo practice in an attempt to change an organization. However, while participants highlighted the importance of transformational and/or visionary leadership styles to sustainability and evolution of collaborative initiatives on campus, disconnections between senior leaders and mid-level practitioners were noted. For example, understanding what constitutes a successful collaboration, participants emphasized the importance of the process, whereas senior administrators were described as more concerned with numbers and outcomes. During the focus group interview, Albert asserted, “administrators deal with numbers and we all deal with students . . . that’s really different.” This finding reflects literature concerning organizational structure and subsequent disconnection between administrators and educators in higher education.

Since different organizational perspectives are used simultaneously within higher education, objectives of senior and mid-level leaders may be dissimilar (Birnbaum, 1988; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013). Discussing academic and student affairs collaborations at Mountain University, senior administrators were described as focused primarily on outcomes rather than the collaborative process itself. Participants portrayed senior administrators as “more corporate” and they revealed negative feelings associated with such business models of higher education. Hence, different objectives such as these

reflect the presence of different organizational perspectives in operation at Mountain University. Unfortunately, these contrasting perspectives contribute to professional disconnections noted by participants through this inquiry.

While participants identified successes within their collaborations, they admitted someone can only do so much “leading from the middle.” Consequently, actions of senior administrators, particularly regarding allocation of resources, influence collaborations on campus. Participants revealed that senior administrators at Mountain University tend to talk about, rather than act on, issues regarding collaboration. Stating repeatedly, administrators do not “walk the walk,” participants suggested senior leaders are not supporting what they verbalize when it comes to academic and student affairs collaborations on campus. Hence, senior administrator support and allocation of resources signifies an institution’s true value and commitment to collaborative professional relationships on campus.

Creation of sustainable collaborative programming faces challenges at Mountain University, as well as institutions of higher education across the country. Historically, separations and professional divisions hamper collaborative efforts, thus influencing sustainability (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Frost et al., 2010; Kezar, 2001a; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Philpott & Strange, 2003). Throughout this inquiry, participants acknowledged challenges faced due to such divisions at Mountain University. Participants also indicated progress and sustainability depend on the ability to move past these barriers and change status quo practice. Albert emphasized:

The goals we have for higher education are changing and the population reserving is changing, but the mechanisms to solve problems are the old mechanisms, and so to force what we used to do, and do it more intensely is simply not going to work. It’s going to take a more general re-design.

Thus, while an organizational re-design of higher education practice may be warranted to create sustainable collaborations, educators and administrators must work around existing barriers until it becomes reality.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND EPILOGUE**

[Collaboration] starts with leadership being able to see that there's a dotted line around the box and collaboration has to happen. (Aurora, Participant)

This chapter summarizes the study's findings and discusses implications for practice and future research regarding academic and student affairs collaboration on a college campus. Final thoughts about the inquiry are addressed in the epilogue. The research findings' summary is discussed first and indicates that inclusivity, commitment, dedication, and support are important qualities of collaborative partners, as well as university leaders. Next, implications for practice are discussed and indicate that participatory styles of leadership, particularly concerning development and sustainability of academic and student affairs collaboration on campus, were viewed favorably by participants. Implications for future research are also considered as conducting additional research can increase understanding and insight to academic and student affairs collaborations employed within higher education and student affairs. Last, final thoughts on this inquiry's process and findings are discussed in the epilogue.

Since academic and student affairs collaborations are used commonly on college campuses (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016), this study sought to understand what these collaborations mean to professionals engaged in them. Thus, this inquiry focused on how participants make meaning of collaboration and its subsequent success. As dichotomies between faculty and student affairs educators exist, professional divisions



were noted throughout. However, participants revealed similar underlying values and goals concerning development, sustainability, and evolution of academic and student affairs collaborations on campus.

Findings of this inquiry indicated the importance of senior administrator support regarding collaborative initiatives on campus. Since divisions between academic and student affairs educators are noted in higher education (Gulley & Mullendore, 2014; Hirsch & Burack, 2002; Whitt, 2011), support from senior university leaders is imperative to fostering such connections on campus. Participants also emphasized the significance of senior administrator support to sustainability, growth, and evolution of academic and student affairs collaborations on campus. Participants highlighted that while senior leaders at Mountain University demonstrate support for implementation of these collaborations, more needs to be done for sustainability and progress of these endeavors. As such, increased understanding of collaboration can help academic and student affairs educators and administrators strengthen such initiatives on campus.

### **Summary of Findings**

Set in an urban university in the Rocky Mountain west, seven academic and student affairs educators contributed to this inquiry. Participants were mid-level professionals at the university, referred to as Mountain University, engaged in first-year experience and/or experiential learning collaborative programming. During this study, participants were interviewed individually and collectively to discuss how they make

meaning of their collaborations on campus. This inquiry explored how participants understand academic and student affairs collaboration at Mountain University and was guided by the research question:

Q1     How do academic and student affairs educators make meaning of their collaboration on campus?

Discussing how collaboration plays out for participants, topics explored included; definition of collaboration, what constitutes a successful collaboration, benefits of collaboration, influences on collaboration, and creation of sustainable collaborations. Regarding what collaboration means to participants, matters of sharing were described as critical to the process. Participants emphasized the importance of sharing values, ideas, as well as professional knowledge and expertise when working collaboratively. Echoed in the literature, collaboration involves sharing of expertise, goals, and power and evolves from an interactive process of relationship building and working together over time (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). As such, while meeting desired outcomes of collaboration was important, elements involved with the actual process of collaboration were equally, if not more, important.

Successful collaboration was described in various ways by participants. While some discussed the importance of reaching desired outcomes as contributing to success, all participants agreed components of the collaborative process itself are significant. Components including collaborating with dedicated and committed professionals, as well as feeling valued were emphasized. Participants explained that working with professionals who share similar goals, values, and commitment is critical to the collaborative process. If fellow collaborators are not consistent with these qualities, collaborations are set up to fail. Feeling value through the process was equally

significant. Specifically, participants discussed the importance of feeling value in their work and feeling valued by collaborative partners, supervisors, and/or senior administrators.

Benefits of academic and student affairs collaborations on campus were also discussed during this inquiry. The benefits of collaboration participants described included: student growth and development, professional growth and development, and institutional benefits. Corresponding with literature (e.g., Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh et al., 2005), participants discussed how academic and student affairs collaborations contribute to holistic learning and provide students a richer college experience. Professional experiences also become enriched as participants described learning more about others, as well as themselves, through the process. Last, benefits to the institution, particularly regarding increased reputation and competitiveness were also noted.

However, while academic and student affairs collaborations provide numerous benefits, prevalent conditions on campus influence such initiatives. Specifically, institutional leadership, professional divides, and allocation of resources were pointed out as barriers. Regarding leadership, participants emphasized the importance of understanding, commitment, and subsequent support offered by senior university leaders. Without such support, collaborative initiatives face increased challenges regarding development and sustainability. Echoed in literature, senior administrator support helps create a sense of acceptance by the organization regarding academic and student affairs collaboration and helps drive academic and student affairs partnerships forward (Crafts et al., 2001; Fenneberg & Hancock, 2018; Fuller & Haugabrook, 2001; Kezar, 2001a; Kezar

& Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Philpott & Strange, 2003; Slantcheva-Durst, 2014). Supportive leadership can also help overcome professional divides common to higher education, as well as allocate resources to support collaboration. Conversely, unsupportive leadership can hinder such initiatives across the Mountain University campus.

Participants encouraged university leaders to seek out more participatory styles of leadership concerning collaborations on campus. Participatory leaders seek ideas and input from all members of the organization, encouraging sharing of knowledge and experience (Arnold & Loughlin, 2013; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Northouse, 2013). Participatory leadership is also a significant component of effective partnerships because these leaders likely support academic and student affairs collaborations more than directive leaders (Slantcheva-Durst, 2014; Whitt et al., 2008). Revealed in this inquiry, early involvement and knowledge sharing was significant to participants. However, while participants described collaborating in inclusive ways, they encouraged senior leaders to follow suit. Stating they can only do so much “leading from the middle,” participants seek more inclusivity and support from university leaders to create sustainable collaborations between academic and student affairs educators.

Suggestions for creating sustainable collaborations on campus included creating a culture of collaboration and appropriately rewarding collaborative contributors. Creating a culture of collaboration on campus involves setting aside time, space, and resources for collaboration to occur. While efforts are currently underway in individual offices, it is not universal at Mountain University. Additionally, rewarding academic and student affairs

educators appropriately is essential for creation of sustainable collaborative programming. Without meaningful reward, these initiatives become less incentivized for these busy professionals.

Challenges to collaboration, particularly regarding professional divides, must be overcome for sustainability and growth to occur (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Philpott & Strange, 2003). Since professional divides within higher education have been prevalent for years (Gulley & Mullendore, 2014; Hirsch & Burack, 2002; Whitt, 2011), movement beyond such divides are taxing. Subsequently, bringing academic and student affairs educators together for collaboration can be a daunting task. Notably, sustaining such collaboration also becomes difficult. Thus, continuing to follow unexamined practices and policies regarding higher education were described as no longer working at Mountain University. Instead, participants suggested that an organizational re-design of higher educational practices needs to be considered to maximize benefits of collaboration on campus.

### **Implications for Practice**

Participants in this inquiry acknowledged action and support from senior university administrators sets the tone and culture for development and sustainability of collaborations on campus. Participants suggested university leaders consider a “general re-design” rather than continuing status-quo practice for development, sustainability, and evolution of academic and student affairs collaborations at Mountain University. Such organizational change includes instilling a collaborative culture on campus, changing policies to support collaboration, changing evaluation and assessment criteria for faculty

and student affairs educators involved in collaboration, and managing the budget in ways to support collaborative initiatives.

Organizational re-design needs to be implemented by senior institutional leaders because such change begins with administrator support and a willingness to modify organizational beliefs and values (Crafts et al., 2001; Craig, 2004; Fuller & Haugabrook, 2001; Kezar, 2001b; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Philpott & Strange, 2003). Albert echoed this sentiment during the focus group interview when he said, “systems take on the characteristics of their leaders.” Accordingly, Aurora emphasized that executing organizational change “starts with leadership.” Thus, to begin, participants suggested senior administrators at Mountain University should encourage and foster a collaborative culture on campus.

### **Instilling a Collaborative Culture**

Participants suggested improving communication, early training for new staff, and mandating certain initiatives could be considered to instill an institutional culture supportive of collaboration. Improving communication begins with relationship building, a component essential for successful collaboration (Fenneberg & Hancock, 2018; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016; Yaun et al., 2018). Allowing academic and student affairs collaboration to flourish requires development of professional relationships and subsequent trust. However, participants highlighted that relationship building and trust needs time and consistency to develop. Thus, time and space for collaboration must be encouraged by institutional leaders at the highest level for these relationships to evolve.

Discussing creation of time and space for collaboration, Aurora articulated:

Creating space and opportunities and a culture of, it’s ok to have a 15-minute coffee break with someone who works across campus, and really embedding that

into a regular kind of thing . . . it would be wonderful . . . so making it a cultural acceptance of that time being really valuable . . . and seeing the starting point for creating relationships.

Importantly, bringing professionals together and building relationships across campus is critical to decreasing professional divides between academic and student affairs educators. Correspondingly, decreasing these divides allows academic and student affairs collaboration to thrive, as participants revealed long-term collaborations are more successful than short-term endeavors. Frank highlighted, “smaller short-term things can easily fall off the radar because you haven’t built that trust.” Thus, setting aside time either monthly or per semester for academic and student affairs educators to connect and engage, helps build relationships and sets the stage for an institutional culture supportive of collaboration.

Another way to decrease professional divides and instill a culture of collaboration at Mountain University is to be more intentional about the physical location of campus offices. Participants revealed that academic and student affairs offices are separated on campus, making professional connections and subsequent relationship building more difficult. Ed reiterated that informal “water cooler conversations” are limited, causing professional interactions to be restricted and formal. Thus, reconsidering academic and student affairs office locations can be helpful in increasing professional interactions and connections. Educators who have opportunities to engage in more informal settings may see professional divisions begin to break down, creating a more collaborative working environment on campus.

Early training and education for new-hires can also contribute to establishment of a collaborative culture at the university. Jessica stated, “we all have to do a new

employee orientation, so it would be nice, right from day-one, to hear about some of the collaborations that are going on and about what that expectation looks like at [Mountain University].” Accordingly, expanding new-hire orientations to inform and encourage collaboration on campus is an avenue to instill a collaborative culture early in a professional’s employment at the university.

Mandating elements concerning collaboration also contributes to establishment of a collaborative culture on campus. For example, while enrollment in FYE at Mountain University is recommended, it is not required for all incoming students. However, FYE assists with college transition skills and connects students with resources on campus. As a result, retention increases, grades improve, and students gain a more valuable and holistic college experience. Because FYE improves a student’s college experience, senior administrator support of such endeavors is key. Moreover, mandating FYE enrollment for all incoming students would necessitate more classes and more collaboration and help reinforce a collaborative academic and student affairs culture on campus.

In addition to student enrollment mandates, professional mandates can also be beneficial. However, challenges arise due to the presence of organized anarchies within higher education. Operating within an organized anarchy, decisions are made at various levels within the university and change over time based on present circumstances and opportunities (Birnbaum, 1988; Cohen et al., 1972; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Manning, 2013). Hence, initiatives can stall because of push-back from other professionals within the university. During the focus group interview, Kate described, “[senior administrators] don’t hold [their] ground when a couple assistant deans are like, no this won’t work for us, instead of saying, well holistically it does, so let’s talk about how your college or



school [can] integrate that.” Hence, mandating collaborative initiatives can be helpful to support a more collective and collaborative culture at Mountain University.

Importantly, mandating collaborative initiatives should not be confused with forcing educators to collaborate. While collaborative initiatives need to be supported and mandated by university leaders, educators should have a choice regarding their level of participation in these endeavors. Collaborations forcing educators to work together was not viewed in a positive manner, as these collaborative partners may not share the same commitment to the endeavor. As such, while collaborative initiatives are best supported by senior administrators, participation in these endeavors should remain voluntary.

Finally, to create organizational change aimed at supporting academic and student affairs collaboration, including collaborative efforts in an institution’s mission statement can be considered by senior leaders (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Whitt et al., 2008). Since a mission statement addresses underlying philosophies of an organization, inclusion of collaboration in the statement creates the foundation to instill a collaborative culture within the organization (Kezar, 2001b; Kezar & Lester, 2009). However, in addition to modifications of the mission statement, participants suggested senior administrators amend institutional policies to support collaborative efforts at Mountain University.

### **Changing University Policies**

Changing policies which create barriers to academic and student affairs collaboration need to be addressed. For example, policies keeping student affairs educators out of the classroom must be adjusted. Student affairs educators wanting to teach UNIV courses in FYE were initially not supported by senior student affairs leaders

through reward and/or compensation for their efforts, even though such compensation originated from the FYE budget controlled by academic affairs. Initially, student affairs educators wishing to teach were required to use sick-time or vacation-time because instruction was not included in their job description. After much deliberation, senior leaders decided to allow compensation in the form of professional development funds for these educators. Participants emphasized, however, teaching and further contributing to student learning should not be challenged. Instead, it should be encouraged, supported, and rewarded by university leaders. Frank stressed, “opportunities to teach should never be costing you as a professional. In fact, we should always be giving our professionals opportunities like that so they can grow.”

Importantly, reward for collaboration does not always have to come in the form of monetary compensation. Participants articulated that reward can also come from feeling valued by institutional leaders. Thus, efforts to recognize academic and student affairs educators for their accomplishments needs to be considered by university leaders. For example, Kate stated, “if you don’t have money to give people raises or you can’t hire more staff members, then when [someone does] research that’s really cool, allow space for that to be shared.” Additionally, including all collaborative partners from the onset of a collaborative process was described as rewarding because it demonstrates value in professionals engaged in these efforts. As such, changing current policies to support collaboration was encouraged by participants. Moreover, changes regarding evaluation and assessment criteria for faculty and staff should also be considered, and is discussed next.

### **Change Evaluation Criteria**

Requirements of teaching, research, and service demand a considerable amount of faculty time. Teaching responsibilities extend beyond the classroom environment, research responsibilities include extensive writing and publication, and service responsibilities require additional time to serve the institution and/or community (Pearson & Bowman, 2000). Accordingly, increased demands coupled with limited time result in hesitation of faculty to collaborate (Kezar, 2001a; Pearson & Bowman, 2000). While changing current evaluation criteria is discussed in the literature (Kezar & Lester, 2009), participants made similar suggestions in this inquiry.

Participants indicated evaluation and assessment criteria utilized at Mountain University needs to be reconsidered as Albert exclaimed, “the goals that we have for higher education are changing.” Importantly, altering parameters of faculty evaluation and adjusting workloads involved with teaching, research, and service, can increase participation in collaborative initiatives with student affairs educators (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000). However, due to current professional demands at Mountain University, finding time for collaboration is difficult, thus inhibiting development of such initiatives across campus. Albert emphasized the significance of time and suggested senior administrators “absolve folks of some of their responsibilities and not add on” when it comes to involvement in collaborative initiatives. Conceivably, if faculty evaluation criteria are transformed and responsibilities are modified, perhaps participation in collaborations across campus could be less challenging.

Correspondingly, evaluation and assessment criteria for student affairs educators also needs reconsideration. For example, senior administrators should consider modifying

job descriptions in a way that does not limit professional roles and responsibilities on campus. Specifically, these senior leaders can encourage teaching opportunities for student affairs educators wanting to instruct. These leaders can also encourage research opportunities for student affairs educators wanting to conduct research. Eliminating professional limitations on educators can help support academic and student affairs collaboration and create holistic learning environments on campus. As such, removal of professional limitations noted specifically in job descriptions, can trigger student affairs educators' evaluation and assessment to change. Furthermore, while policy change is significant, participants suggested senior administrators can also examine ways to be more creative with the budget to encourage collaboration, especially when faced with limited financial resources.

### **Managing the Budget**

Participants reiterated that demonstrating transparency with the budget can also help support collaborative initiatives at Mountain University. Initially, a mind-shift about limited resources must be considered to effectively support academic and student affairs collaboration. Rather than interpreting scarce resources as a threat, senior and mid-level academic and student affairs leaders are encouraged to think more creatively about how to use their resources effectively. For example, transparency, consolidating duplication on campus, and applying for various grants can be considered to make resources available to both groups.

Budget transparency was emphasized by participants, especially when resources are scarce. When a lack of transparency exists, people within the organization become fearful about losing what little resources are allocated to them. To alleviate such fears,

senior administrators are encouraged to be more open and honest about how and why resources are allocated. Participants recommended senior university leaders use open and honest dialog to encourage organizational change since utilization of such dialog alleviates feelings of anxiety and contributes to a more positive work environment (Craig, 2004).

Consolidating duplication on campus may also be beneficial in addressing scarce resources available to institutions of higher education. Rather than continue to have different offices working on similar objectives, senior administrators are encouraged to find avenues to connect these offices and share resources of money, personnel, and time. Importantly, senior administrators must assure mid-level academic and student affairs leaders that consolidating duplication on campus should not be viewed competitively. Instead, sharing and cooperation can be emphasized to maximize these collaborations and their subsequent benefits. Echoed in the literature, working collaboratively can allow financial resources to be extended, particularly if both units are contributing to funding (Manning et al., 2014). Correspondingly, senior leaders can encourage mid-level leaders to view collaboration as cost effective for academic and student affairs units, rather than as a threat.

Another strategy to overcome scarce resources includes applying for various types of grants. Specifically, high-impact practice (HIPs) grants were discussed by participants. High-impact practice grants are available to faculty who incorporate high-impact teaching and learning practices into their course. While Kate explained these types of grants are being utilized in “a lot of schools and colleges [on campus],” they are more specific to faculty. However, Kate emphasized, “student affairs people are doing high-

impact practices too, so [including them] is a really good idea.” Accordingly, participants suggested senior leaders attempt to be more creative regarding budget constraints and re-frame in ways that support academic and student affairs collaborative initiatives at Mountain University.

Since goals and populations within higher education change over time, senior leaders need to reconsider outdated policies, procedures, and practices. Appropriately, transformational leadership can be helpful to attempt this kind of modification. Transformational leadership focuses on organizational change while also attempting to meet the needs of people within the organization (Burns, 1978; Northouse, 2013). As such, transformational leaders are visionary and seek to change status-quo practice. Since changing current policy and practice was emphasized by participants, this type of leadership is encouraged to create organizational change on campus.

Participants revealed that while academic and student affairs collaboration with FYE and experiential learning collaborations have demonstrated success, institutional leaders can improve support of these endeavors. Most importantly, university leaders must adapt their practices to meet current student needs in this changing climate. Thus, while Mountain University is on the right track with academic and student affairs collaborations on campus, more work needs to be done to support collaborative growth, evolution, and sustainability.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Since academic and student affairs collaborations are implemented across college campuses nationwide (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016), educators and administrators can strive to understand as much as possible about these efforts. While this

inquiry provides insight into meaning making of collaboration for these mid-level academic and student affairs educators, future research can include many perspectives. First, research about senior administrators' perspectives on collaborative efforts of academic and student affairs educators is pertinent. As noted by participants in this study, senior administrators at Mountain University operate in a corporate model, focusing primarily on outcomes, whereas mid-level academic and student affairs educators tend to focus more on the processes of collaboration. While these observations are discussed by participants, senior administrators are not included in this study, so their perspectives are not addressed. Therefore, conducting this study with senior leader viewpoints of academic and student affairs collaborations on campus, can reap deeper meaning of the phenomenon.

In addition to interviewing different organizational leaders and educators, different college and/or university settings can be considered for future research. State institutions of higher education such as Mountain University, are restricted and regulated by state budgets. As such, state institutions face increased budget constraints and scarce resources. Perhaps conducting this study at a private institution that does not rely on state funding would provide additional insight to understanding academic and student affairs collaboration on campus. Moreover, conducting this inquiry at other types of institutions (e.g., Women's colleges, Historically Black colleges, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Religious colleges and universities) allows more diverse viewpoints to be shared, also helping gain deeper insight to the phenomenon. Importantly, since higher education is changing and academic and student affairs collaborations are on the rise, examination of

academic and student affairs practice is necessary to provide students a holistic and meaningful college experience.

### **Epilogue**

When I began this study, my intention was to present data in a way that reflected each participants' background and social identity. I anticipated discussing and composing participant stories individually to provide richer and thicker descriptions of each educator involved in this inquiry. I believe individuals' unique life experiences influence understanding and meaning making, so I wanted to delve into each persons' story in greater detail. However, once I began interviewing participants, concerns of anonymity and confidentiality were emphasized. While participants expressed they wanted to be open and honest with me, some stressed the importance of anonymity because their collaborative efforts on campus have been challenging.

Abiding to narrative inquiry, my role as the investigator was to interact honestly with participants, allowing co-construction of reality to emerge (Clandinin, 2016; Creswell, 2013). During this inquiry, storytelling was used as an avenue to share experiences and subsequent meaning making with participants. As such, building relationships and subsequent trust with participants was key to the process. Therefore, because I wanted to build trust and honor participants' wishes, I altered my approach to expressing findings of the inquiry. Rather than conveying individual stories through this discourse, participant viewpoints were told as a collective story. Doing so allowed meaning and understanding of collaboration to be explored, while protecting and honoring participants' concerns. Notably, while a collective story was not originally anticipated, insight to academic and student affairs collaboration was gained from this



inquiry. My hope is that thick description of the whole story does not lessen the impact of each participants' contribution to this study.

Also important to note is that the relationships I built with participants during this inquiry caused me to change some of my feelings regarding disconnection between academic and student affairs educators. While I began this study with strong feelings of disconnection between these organizational units, engaging with participants allowed me to understand important similarities between academic and student affairs educators. Many academic and student affairs educators, particularly those involved in collaborations on campus, are student-centered professionals concerned with improving college students' experiences. Because these beliefs are also significant to me, I now feel more connected with other professionals due to the understanding that we all share similar goals. Thus, while professional disconnections within higher education and student affairs practice may still exist, my personal feelings of disconnection have decreased as a result of this inquiry.

Throughout this inquiry, the importance of sharing while collaborating was emphasized. Sharing of values, goals, ideas, knowledge, and expertise was critical to participants' understanding and meaning making of collaboration and subsequent feelings of success. Corresponding with the literature (e.g., Fenneberg & Hancock, 2018; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016; Yaun et al., 2018), collaborations evolve from relationship building and include joint planning, as well as shared goals, knowledge, expertise, and power. Appropriately, sharing and working inclusively while collaborating was highlighted by

participants. Notably, academic and student affairs collaborations based on mutual sharing, trust, and commitment were viewed positively by educators engaged in such efforts.

Sharing and working inclusively was also discussed in terms of leadership style. Leaders practicing participatory, or shared, styles of leadership seek input from organizational members and include them in decision-making processes (Arnold & Loughlin, 2013; Northouse, 2013). Mid-level educators engaged in this inquiry revealed they practice in a participatory way, especially within their collaborations. However, senior administrators were portrayed as practicing less inclusively. As such, these mid-level academic and student affairs educators sought more participatory and shared leadership styles from senior university leaders at Mountain University.

Leaders utilizing participatory and inclusive practices seek ideas and involvement from organizational members about the operation and growth of an organization (Arnold & Loughlin, 2013; Northouse, 2013). Notably, these styles of leadership are encouraged for institutions wishing to increase collaborative efforts as they foster sharing of knowledge across different levels of the organization (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Thus, changes in institutional leadership to more participatory styles can contribute to more collaborative efforts on campus and was described as crucial to development and sustainability of academic and student affairs collaboration. Inclusion of all members from the onset of an initiative creates transparency and a sense of value for educators, leading to positive collaborative experiences.

Senior university leaders were also encouraged to consider organizational change to improve support of academic and student affairs collaboration on campus. In terms of

leadership style, transformational approaches are aimed at changing an organization, while also attending to its members' needs (Arnold & Loughlin, 2013; Burns, 1978; Northouse, 2013). As such, transformational approaches to leadership are described as essential qualities for senior leaders to progress from status-quo practice and drive collaborative efforts on campus forward. Examples of changing policy and evaluation/assessment criteria suggested by participants highlight the significance of university administrators to collaboration since organizational change must be initiated by these leaders (Crafts et al., 2001; Fuller & Haugabrook, 2001; Kezar, 2001b; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Philpott & Strange, 2003).

Support from university leaders cannot be overemphasized when considering academic and student affairs collaboration on campus. Many times, collaborative initiatives encounter barriers and resistance within an organization (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Frost et al., 2010; Kezar, 2001a; Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Pace et al., 2006; Pearson & Bowman, 2000; Philpott & Strange, 2003; Whitt, 2011). These barriers often result from professional separation between academic and student affairs educators, leading to decreased understanding of each other's roles, responsibilities, and contributions to student learning (Kezar, 2017; Philpott & Strange, 2003; Whitt, 2011). As such, university leaders must find ways to connect academic and student affairs educators on campus and help bridge these professional separations. Without senior administrator support, these connections are more difficult to form, thus hindering development and growth of academic and student affairs collaboration.

Senior leader support is also significant in terms of instilling a collaborative culture on campus. Since participants described senior administrators as setting the tone

and culture of an organization, university leaders' actions demonstrate their true commitment to on-campus collaborative initiatives. Honestly supporting academic and student affairs collaboration translates to acting upon promises. Hence, senior leaders stating that collaboration is important to college students' educational experience must act in ways supporting these initiatives. Not doing so impedes academic and student affairs collaboration and contributes to negative feelings experienced by collaborative partners.

Importantly, mid-level educators participating in this inquiry indicated limitations to "leading from the middle" of an organization. While these leaders have influence within their respective divisions and offices on campus, they are only empowered to do so much. Thus, systemic organizational change intended to support collaboration must come from senior university leaders. Without their support, growth and sustainability of academic and student affairs collaborations is compromised.

Engagement with participants during this inquiry provided insight to understanding collaboration between academic and student affairs educators on a college campus. Given what I have learned through this inquiry, partnering with inclusive, dedicated, and committed professionals determines success and longevity of collaboration. Hence, educators and senior university leaders engaged in collaborative efforts must demonstrate these qualities when collaborating. Collaborative partners are encouraged to share, contribute, and work together on collaborative initiatives, while senior leaders are encouraged to support collaboration on campus. Without genuine commitment and support from all professionals involved, academic and student affairs

collaborations remain challenging and unable to flourish. As a result, creation of holistic learning environments for college students becomes impeded.

The use of academic and student affairs collaboration within higher education is essential to improving the college experience and is encouraged across college campuses nationwide (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Frost et al., 2010; Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Ozaki & Hornak, 2014; Yaun et al., 2018). Importantly, as these collaborations are implemented nationwide (Kezar, 2017; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016), educators and administrators must consider how the goals and practices of higher education and student affairs are evolving. As such, university leaders are encouraged to keep pace with these changes and progress from status-quo practices currently enacted. In conclusion, examination of higher education and student affairs practice, particularly involving academic and student affairs collaboration, is essential to learn more about this phenomenon and help students, as well as educators, have more holistic and meaningful experiences in the academy.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

***ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS EDUCATORS MAKE MEANING OF  
THEIR COLLABORATION ON CAMPUS***

**Individual Interview Questions:**

Initial individual interview questions focused on the participant and their role on campus. Due to the emergent design of this inquiry, follow-up questions for the second individual interview and focus group were based on initial participant responses. By and large, questions were aimed at revealing individual meaning making of academic and student affairs collaborations on campus. Individual interview questions included:

- What does collaboration mean to you?
  - Can you think of a metaphor or symbol for this relationship?
- Describe the collaboration that you are involved with. Please share stories about encounters you share with those you collaborate with.
- In what ways do academic and student affairs collaborations influence a student's college experience?
- In what ways do academic and student affairs collaborations benefit the institution?
- How do you describe a successful collaboration?
- Describe what you have learned through your process of collaboration.
- Describe how your collaboration influenced your personal and/or professional development.
- Please describe how institutional leadership influences your collaborations.
- Please describe additional factors that influence your collaborations.
- Describe how connected you feel with those you collaborate with.
  - How does physical location of offices influence connectedness?
- Prior to participating in your current collaboration, please describe any expectations and/or beliefs you held regarding academic and student affairs partnerships.
  - Describe how those expectations and/or beliefs have played out for you in your current collaborations.
- Help me understand what you would change, if you could, about academic and student affairs collaborations on this campus.



**Focus Group Questions:**

The overall intention of utilizing a focus group is to build upon previously collected stories within an inclusive environment, thus enriching the stories and subsequent understanding of them.

Focus group questions included:

- Besides putting people together to collaborate, what can administrators do to build cross-campus, or cross-disciplinary relationships?
- How can administrators contribute to helping you feel valued?
  - And, how can they help you feel value in your work?
- A cultural divide between AA and SA has historically existed for a long period of time within higher education. How do you see collaborations influencing that divide?
- What's needed on this campus, to not only sustain, but grow collaborations?
- Please describe any new insight that participation in this study has offered you.

**APPENDIX B**  
**CONSENT FORM**



## **Informed Consent for Participation in Research**

*University of Northern Colorado*

**Project Title:** Academic and Student Affairs Educators Making Meaning of Their Collaborative Experiences on Campus

**Primary Researcher:** Genia Lemonedes, Doctoral Student, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership

**Phone:** 720-301-3110

**Email:** [jetfang12@gmail.com](mailto:jetfang12@gmail.com)

**Purpose of this Study:** The purpose of this study is to understand how faculty and student affairs professionals make meaning of their collaborative experiences on campus. In addition, this inquiry examines the meaning of the term collaboration, what constitutes a successful collaboration, and how collaborations play out for these academic and student affairs professionals in their current experiences. Finally, the study seeks to examine the benefits and drawbacks of academic and student affairs collaborations for college students.

**Description of Procedures:** I am asking you to participate in the entire study which includes two individual interviews and one focus group interview. Each interview is expected to last 60-90 minutes.

The first individual interview will focus primarily on getting acquainted with the participant and their background. Initially, conversations regarding individual backgrounds and positions in higher education will be discussed. Progressing through the interview, perspectives and meaning making regarding academic and student affairs professional collaborations will be addressed.

The second individual interview will delve more into participants' meaning of collaborations and interdisciplinary working relationships. Initially, I intend to follow-up on information discussed previously. However, my intention through the remainder of the interview is to further explore meaning making around academic and student affairs collaborations.

Following the two individual interviews, a focus group interview will be conducted. The purpose of utilizing focus groups is to build upon stories collected in previous individual interviews. Focus groups create an environment that allows participants to interact

collectively, thus sharing their experiences related to academic and student affairs collaborations occurring on their campus.

**What are the risks?** There are no foreseeable risks in this study. However, if you experience some level of emotional distress or discomfort while being interviewed, the researcher will stop the discussion and check-in with you, reminding you that you are free to leave the study if you choose. If at any time, you feel that you would benefit from a deeper one on one session, campus and/or community based resources will be made available to you.

**What are the benefits?** There is no direct benefit to you, the participant, other than reflection on your experiences. However, this study is beneficial because it informs institutional leaders on how academic and student affairs educators make meaning of their collaborative efforts across campus. Gaining such insight can increase understanding of these collaborations and potentially help with development and sustainability of such programming.

Compensation for your participation will include beverages and/or food consumed during interviews. Costs, like travel and lost time will be moderated as I will work with you to schedule an interview during a time, and at a location, most convenient for you.

**How will my privacy be protected?** This research is confidential. All data collected including: recordings, notes, and other documentation will be stored in a locked cabinet or desk in the office of the Investigator. Additionally, the Faculty Advisor, Dr. Florence Guido, will retain consent forms for a period of three years as required by University of Northern Colorado policy. After a three-year period, all consent forms, notes, audio recordings, and subsequent transcriptions will be destroyed.

Data will only be accessible by the Investigator and the Faculty Advisor. Transcriptions and working documents without identifiable information will be saved on a password protected system and accessible to only the Investigator and Faculty Advisor.

Additionally, to maintain the anonymity of participants, only the investigator will have access to identifiable information. You, the participant, shall choose and be identified by a pseudonym in all transcriptions and analysis in order to remove identifiable information and further ensure anonymity.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Sherry May,

IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

**Consent to Participate:**

By signing this form, I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I also agree to allow the investigator to digitally record all interview sessions.

|                          |       |
|--------------------------|-------|
| _____                    | _____ |
| Signature of Participant | Date  |

|                             |                        |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| _____                       | _____                  |
| Printed Name of Participant | Phone Number and Email |

|                           |       |
|---------------------------|-------|
| _____                     | _____ |
| Signature of Investigator | Date  |

|                              |
|------------------------------|
| _____                        |
| Printed Name of Investigator |

***Thank you for assisting with this research.***

**APPENDIX C**  
**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**



DATE: April 7, 2017

TO: Genia Lemonedes

FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1047050-2] Academic and Student Affairs Educators Making Meaning of Their Collaborative Experiences on Campus

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: April 7, 2017

EXPIRATION DATE: April 7, 2021

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

**Genia -**

**Thank you for the thorough and swift revisions to your consent form as requested. Your materials are now verified/approved exempt and you may begin participant recruitment and data collection using these revised forms and protocols.**

**Best wishes with your research.**

**Sincerely,**

**Dr. Megan Stellino, UNC IRB Co-Chair**

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years. If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or [Sherry.May@unco.edu](mailto:Sherry.May@unco.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.