

AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

**CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS
CONDUCTIVE TO ADAPTIVE CHANGE**

by

Ben L. Thomas

A dissertation submitted to the
School of Behavioral and Applied Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS CONDUCTIVE TO ADAPTIVE CHANGE

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Multiple factors, including affordability and expected outcomes, have converged to cause unusual pressure on higher education administrators and faculty and prompt the need for change (Kezar, 2009; Selingo, 2013; Zemsky, 2013). This situation aligns with the adaptive change model because of the focus on identifying innovative solutions for significant challenges (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). However, the research on successful adaptive change at colleges and universities is limited. This study was initiated to identify environmental characteristics at two exemplar institutions that have been able to implement successful adaptive change on an ongoing basis. For this research, a comparative case analysis methodology was used to study two institutions identified as leaders in higher education in relation to creating and implementing solutions to significant challenges. The research question guiding this study was the following: *What are the environmental characteristics within a higher education institution that consistently produce adaptive change?* Research was

conducted during a 1-week visit to each campus, with a total of 44 interviews conducted with employees of the 2 institutions. Coding and analysis of the data utilized the NVIVO 10 software to categorize related words and phrases into unit groupings. Themes were then developed to explain how participants described the characteristics of their institution's environment. Each case was analyzed separately before cross-case synthesis was applied to identify common characteristics as well as themes unique to the institution. The findings indicated that change occurred during 3 distinct phases at each institution: motivating, implementing, and sustaining change.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Various challenges confront higher education administrators and faculty during the current era. While striving to achieve institutional missions, surrounding market forces have converged on colleges and universities to create a difficult climate for leaders (Kezar, 2009). Critiques from politicians, students, and the media have highlighted numerous problems, including unsustainable funding models, increasing student loan amounts, failure to improve success rates for under-represented population demographics, and the need for applicable education (Blumenstyk, 2014a; Kezar, 2009). A general consensus has developed among college and university leaders that current practices will change, but there are a range of predictions regarding how higher education will be delivered in the coming years (Zemsky, 2013). Despite this set of realities, higher education is perceived as resisting change as a result of an ongoing failure to adequately address concerns such as high tuition costs and low retention and graduation rates in recent decades (Blumenstyk, 2014a; Selingo, 2013; Zemsky, 2013). The purpose of this research was to study the environmental characteristics of exemplar institutions that have consistently created and implemented adaptive solutions to significant challenges. The specific research question was: *What are the environmental characteristics within a higher education institution that consistently produce adaptive change?*

With increased challenges arising from external and internal sources, adjustments may be forced on colleges and universities if thoughtfully developed strategic changes are not initiated by those who hold responsibility for ensuring their fiscal viability. Higher education leaders have an opportunity to respond now in ways that ensure fulfilling the mission of higher education generally as well as at specific institutions (Wildavsky, Kelly, & Carey, 2012). College and university administrators and faculty who can understand changing dynamics and apply creative solutions will provide important leadership into the future. Administrative and faculty leaders will need to develop environments that are conducive to adaptive change to produce needed solutions for current challenges, ensuring institutional vitality and sustainability. Too often, change within the higher education setting has been constrained by tradition, institutional cultures, or misunderstandings between personnel or departments.

This study focused on the environmental characteristics within higher education that promote adaptive change because of the need to understand beliefs and values that encourage and limit innovative approaches. Educational leaders are confronted with unique challenges at individual institutions, but understanding the environmental characteristics at exemplar institutions will help increase the capacity for effectively navigating significant change efforts. This chapter introduces the rationale and purpose of this study along with articulating the exploratory questions that guided the research.

Pressures to Change

The U.S. higher education system contributes significantly to society by helping students develop in their maturity, guiding academic inquiry and learning, conducting research, and preparing students for gainful employment (Selingo, 2013; Wildavsky et

al., 2012). These essential functions should continue to be supported and enhanced (Selingo, 2013; Wildavsky et al., 2012). In addition, colleges and universities serve as repositories for significant financial and social capital, institutionally and collectively having the potential to impact society (Wildavsky et al., 2012). With increasing frequency, students and families perceive obtaining a college degree as providing a pathway for advancement in today's society (Selingo, 2013). The economic benefits for individuals who graduate from college have increased significantly in the past 30 years (Brewer & Tierney, 2012). Individuals who do not complete a college degree, approximately half of the U.S. population, typically are more limited in terms of economic earning potential, given the average annual salary of a high school graduate is \$19,000, an amount below the poverty level for a family of four (Selingo, 2013). The wage gap between high school and college graduates has increased in recent years, with individuals who have completed a bachelor's degree earning twice as much as high school graduates on average (Zemsky, 2013).

Despite the positive contributions made by colleges and universities to society as a whole, several converging factors are impacting the higher education sector, with each issue influencing public, private, or for-profit institutions to varying degrees. For example, between the years 2009 and 2013, Moody's Investors Services downgraded 141 college or university credit ratings, primarily due to concerns related to unstable revenue models (Blumenstyk, 2014a). Given the budget model for most postsecondary institutions is tuition-driven, it is notable that nearly half of private colleges have reported failing to achieve enrollment and revenue targets, as high school populations have decreased and uncertainty about the cost and value of a college degree has increased

(Carlson, 2014). Representatives from Moody's have also expressed concern regarding the financial health of public institutions that have relied on tuition increases to generate revenue (Blumenstyk, 2014a). Yet, administrators at many public universities are being confronted by funding constraints from state legislators, who increasingly are mandating tuition freezes or caps (Blumenstyk, 2014a). The challenges confronting higher education leaders and providing pressure to change are categorized in this section as increasing costs, changing student demographics, student success and outcomes, and increased scrutiny and accountability.

First, tuition costs have increased for students as college and university administrators are confronted with higher institutional expenses. Many observers of higher education have noted that the costs for students to attend a higher education institution have increased dramatically in recent decades (Selingo, 2013). Between 2000 and 2010, tuition costs rose 68% at public 4-year institutions; the increase over that same period was 39% at private institutions (Selingo, 2013). As students and families attempt to navigate higher costs, institutions of all types and size are also confronted with significant fiscal challenges due to unsustainable budget models (Martin & Samels, 2009). General public resistance to increased taxes, along with demands for other types of services, has reduced the level of governmental funding available for public higher education (Brewer & Tierney, 2012; Zemsky, 2013). For example, state funding for public full-time students decreased in relative terms by 26.1% between 1990 and 2010 (Zemsky, 2013). As a result, colleges and institutions have been forced to rely on higher levels of tuition revenue. Public universities, therefore, have followed tactics

implemented by private institutions of increasing tuition costs, resulting in students now paying more for expenses than does the state government (Selingo, 2013).

Second, as the population within the United States continues to grow and diversify, the students attending colleges and universities increasingly represent racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups who have previously been underrepresented (Brewer & Tierney, 2012). Although the higher education system has succeeded in providing increased access to all populations of students, colleges and universities have struggled with low retention and graduation rates among underrepresented students (Selingo, 2013; Zemsky, 2013).

Third, there are varied critiques of student success and outcomes resulting from a college or university experience. Despite improving access to higher education, colleges continue to struggle with student attrition (Wildavsky et al., 2012). In a typical year, more than 400,000 students choose to stop attending a U.S. college or university (Selingo, 2013). Only slightly more than half of students who enter the U.S. higher education system complete a bachelor's degree within 6 years of entering college, resulting in the nation ranking twelfth worldwide for postsecondary degree completion among young people (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Selingo, 2013; Wildavsky et al., 2012). Along with concerns about completion, some research has demonstrated minimal advancements among college students relative to critical thinking and complex reasoning skills (Arum & Roksa, 2011). Learning outcomes have been achieved by students with decreasing frequency in recent decades (Arum & Roksa, 2011).

Additionally, as the costs for college have increased and individuals have assumed more of the debt burden to cover educational expenses, people now view a

college education as an expense that requires sufficient return on that investment (Selingo, 2013). Specifically, many politicians, students, and employers now expect a college experience to provide preparation for a career (Selingo, 2013; Zemsky, 2013). For many faculty and administrators, shifting the focus of preparing an educated citizenry away from the traditional orientation in the liberal arts and humanities is a significant change in deeply held beliefs about the purpose of higher education (Zemsky, 2013).

Finally, college and university leaders are confronted with increasing levels of scrutiny and accountability from federal and state legislators and the media. Related to the disappointing trends highlighted in this section, politicians and leaders of non-profit organizations have called for increased accountability for the higher education sector, with a particular mandate to increase the number of graduates (Wildavsky et al., 2012). Even as political leaders in most states are reducing public higher education funding to accommodate other needs, they are also pressuring college and university administrators to increase the number of graduates (Martin & Samels, 2009).

The issues presented in this section provide a sample of the challenges confronting higher education administrators and faculty. Critics like Selingo (2013) have argued that “the higher-education industry is beset by hubris, opposition to change, and resistance to accountability” (p. X). Common complaints from government officials and the general public have focused on lack of student access, disappointingly low rates of graduation, curriculum that is not applicable enough to employer needs, and a system that is too expensive (Selingo, 2013; Wildavsky et al., 2012; Zemsky, 2013). Public and non-profit leaders are increasingly demanding innovative approaches that reduce expenses and increase output while also enhancing the quality of education (Selingo, 2013;

Wildavsky et al., 2012). The criticisms frequently directed toward colleges and universities could result in changes that are imposed by external forces, such as federal or state governments, or the situation could be viewed as an opportunity for institutions to strategically improve, thereby developing the social good delivered by higher education for individuals and society at large (Wildavsky et al., 2012). This study focused on the adaptive change model, in which new solutions to significant problems are developed through new learning and the involvement of people throughout an organization (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009).

Adaptive Change

The serious nature of the challenges confronting higher education leaders requires significant solutions. Higher education researchers have previously studied various change models, including planned and cultural approaches (Kondakci & Van den Broeck, 2009). The adaptive change model was selected for this study due to the model's emphasis on addressing significant challenges with innovative approaches along with a commitment to learning. The adaptive change model is well-suited to address the problems currently facing higher education because it explores deeply held beliefs and values that limit innovative solutions. This approach, when successfully implemented, can provoke new solutions to significant challenges. The adaptive change model increases the understanding of how leadership, systems, and adaptation interact and contribute to change (Heifetz et al., 2009). Many contemporary issues require creating new knowledge or skills along with significant changes to current priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties (Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997; Wagner & Kegan, 2006).

Common scenarios in which adaptive change may be the best approach include proposed solutions in which deeply held beliefs are challenged, previously successful values and approaches become less relevant, or when new competing perspectives have emerged (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). Thus, implementing an adaptive change approach requires people to change priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties (Heifetz et al., 2009). Adaptive change necessitates involvement by people throughout an organization, inclusion of diverse perspectives, allowing experimentation, significant new learning, and adequate time for implementation (Heifetz et al., 2009). The defining characteristics of the adaptive change model include a willingness to challenge routines, developing new learning, incorporating broad involvement from people within the organization, and resolving difficult problems.

It can be a challenge for organizational leaders to raise questions and concerns that prompt adaptive solutions. The climate for faculty or administrators attempting to initiate adaptive change at a college or university can be especially difficult due to risk aversion, desire to continue traditions, or failure to understand the financial realities confronting students and institutions (Selingo, 2013; Wildavsky et al., 2012). This research contributes increased understanding of the environmental factors that encourage personnel working in higher education settings to participate in adaptive solutions to institutional challenges.

Purpose of the Study

The research addressed gaps in the literature related to the environmental characteristics that make adaptive change possible within the higher education setting. The environmental characteristics of a college or university that promote successful

change are a phenomenon worthy of analysis because of the need to identify successful pathways to change within higher education. Thus, as previously mentioned, the purpose of this research was to study the environmental characteristics of exemplar institutions that have consistently created and implemented adaptive solutions to significant challenges. The research question guiding the study was: *What are the environmental characteristics within a higher education institution that consistently produce adaptive change?*

Because the process of leading ongoing and sustainable change is a challenge for many higher education leaders, the findings of this study will be of interest to individuals who seek to create an adaptive institutional environment. Higher education administrators and faculty will benefit from potential solutions for encouraging institutional environments that promote or allow change.

Exploratory Questions

Along with the research question that formed the foundation for this study, the following additional exploratory questions were considered during the research:

How do faculty and administrators perceive the characteristics of an environment that promotes adaptive change?

Which factors in the organization's environment lead a college or university to pursue adaptive solutions as opposed to technical approaches?

How have organizational systems or policies been implemented or adjusted to promote adaptive change?

In what ways have individual leadership approaches contributed to an environment conducive to adaptive change?

What elements within a college or university environment contribute to an ability to continually adapt?

What factors in an organization's environment contribute to openness to challenging beliefs?

What characteristics in an organization's environment promote an ability to learn new ways of operating?

What are environmental characteristics that provide obstacles to adaptive change?

Definition of Terms

Various terms utilized in this research have multiple meanings, depending on the context. The following terms have been defined to clarify their use in this research project.

Adaptive change describes a process that allows ongoing and positive change (Heifetz et al., 2009). The model incorporates the following characteristics: challenges current routines, requires new learning, includes broad involvement from people within an organization, and resolves difficult problems (Heifetz et al., 2009). Adaptive change is required when deeply held beliefs are challenged, previously successful values and approaches have become less relevant, or when new competing perspectives have emerged (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

The *climate* of an organization is “the feeling that is conveyed in a group by the physical layout and the way in which members of the organization interact with each other, with customers, or with other outsiders” (Schein, 2010, p. 15). The climate represents the underlying assumptions and, thus, can be perceived as a manifestation of the broader culture (Schein, 2010).

The *environment* of an organization is comprised of systems and leadership approaches that can be changed over time. The organizational environment defines the regular experience of people's perceptions and actions within the organizational context (Frishammar, 2006). In particular, the organizational environment relates to how strategies and policies are identified and implemented along with the acquisition and distribution of resources (Frishammar, 2006).

Organizational culture is defined as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organization from others" (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 344). The strength and stability of an organizational culture varies based on when an institution was founded and the emotional intensity connected to its history (Schein, 2010).

Technical change involves solutions based on current expert knowledge, a singular decision by a senior leader, or current organizational structures or procedures (Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). Implementing technical change allows applying paradigms that have previously been developed and accepted (Wagner & Kegan, 2006).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the rationale and purpose of this study along with defining the exploratory questions that guided the research. The challenges for college and university leaders outlined in this chapter represent a unique time, reflecting the urgency of shaping the future of the higher education field. Administrators and faculty may delay changes and hope for a reversal in some of the converging trends described, an approach that many critics expect to occur (Zemsky, 2013). However, a

failure of higher education administrators and faculty to initiate significant, adaptive changes could result in government officials choosing to implement disruptive policies. Instead, the current situation provides the opportunity for faculty and administrators to envision and implement a new future for higher education in which colleges and universities adapt in ways that more effectively serve students and communities. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the research literature that is relevant to this study; subsequent chapters will analyze environments that promote successful adaptive change within higher education, comparing the findings of this study to the literature. In particular, this study identifies the environmental characteristics evident within exemplar institutions that may provide a pathway to pursue adaptive change for administrators and faculty.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous factors, including increased tuition expenses, student debt levels, reduced government funding, changing demands from prospective students, and the pervasive availability of technology, are simultaneously generating pressure on colleges and universities to implement significant change (Brewer & Tierney, 2012). However, the higher education system is generally perceived as notoriously slow to change, and many institutions have failed to implement substantial adjustments or new approaches in recent years (Brewer & Tierney, 2012; Selingo, 2013). Regardless of a willingness to change, current external pressures have coalesced to an extent that administrators and faculty at colleges and universities will be forced to respond with innovative solutions (Brewer & Tierney, 2012; Calderon & Mathies, 2013; Wagner & Kegan, 2006). For many institutions, identifying and implementing new approaches will be necessary for survival (Brewer & Tierney, 2012). The purpose of this research was to study the environmental characteristics of exemplar institutions that have consistently created and implemented adaptive solutions to significant challenges. The research question guiding the study was: *What are the environmental characteristics within a higher education institution that consistently produce adaptive change?*

For decades, the U.S. general public, government officials, and business leaders have recognized the value of a higher education experience for students. Governmental

leaders at the national and state level have acknowledged the significant contribution made by colleges and universities to economic competitiveness worldwide (Hrabowski, 2014). Politicians have increasingly incentivized student enrollment by providing funding for students through grants and loans (Vedder, 2004). Higher education research has consistently demonstrated personal and community benefits for completion of a degree, including increased earning potential and personal development (Tinto, 2012). Yet, families and students with increasing frequency view a college education as opening opportunities for career advancement or even as a necessity in today's competitive economic environment (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Schejbal, 2012; Selingo, 2013; Wagner & Kegan, 2006). The global transition to a knowledge economy has also increased the demand for higher education because of the need for skilled and highly educated employees (Wagner & Kegan, 2006). Employers are increasingly dependent on people who demonstrate skills to solve complex problems and the ability to create new products, processes, or solutions (Florida, 2006; Wagner & Kegan, 2006).

The demand for increased access to higher education is reflected by the growth in full and part-time college students at many colleges and universities from a cumulative enrollment of 11 million in 1976 to just under 20 million students as of 2013 (Lipka, 2014). However, despite the economic and personal benefits to graduates and enrollment growth of many colleges and universities, unprecedented pressures to improve performance have been directed at colleges and universities by the general public in recent years (Hrabowski, 2014; Schejbal, 2012; Strayhorn, 2011). Politicians, students, families, and the media have clamored for improved access to higher education, success from students who enter the system, and reduced costs (Hrabowski, 2014; Schejbal,

2012). The broad issues of concern for the various constituencies continue to center on affordability, accessibility, and accountability (Zemsky, 2013).

This literature review introduces the important issues that pressure colleges and universities to adapt, with a focus on increasing costs, changing demographics, student success and outcomes, and increased scrutiny and accountability. The following sections, then, provide an overview of various change models in higher education, describe the adaptive change model, and present literature relevant to the environmental characteristics that promote change.

Pressures to Change

The pressures experienced by college and university administrators and faculty to modify the traditional practices of delivering higher education have increased due to particular factors, including rising costs for students and families, changing national demographics, disappointing levels of student success and outcomes, and increased scrutiny and accountability (Brewer & Tierney, 2012; Calderon & Mathies, 2013). Administrators and faculty operate in an era when the revenue and budgeting models for colleges and universities have changed dramatically because of reductions in federal and state government funding, higher levels of institutional aid for students at private institutions, and difficulties for many institutions with fundraising (Brewer & Tierney, 2012; Bruininks, Keeney, & Thorp, 2010; Martin & Samels, 2009; Massy, 2012). In addition, colleges and universities are increasingly expected by politicians and the general public to function with increased levels of accountability, while continuing to meet the needs and demands of society (Calderon & Mathies, 2013). For example, government and business leaders frequently expect colleges and universities to adapt or

add program offerings to meet shifting market demands for training in occupational fields (Calderon & Mathies, 2013). The confluence of these factors, both related and unrelated, has created an environment that necessitates adaptation. This section introduces pressures requiring institutional leaders to consider potential alternative structures, delivery models, and practices. The section addresses the following issues: increasing costs, changing demographics, student success and outcomes, and increased scrutiny and accountability.

Increasing Costs

Critics of higher education have frequently claimed that the steadily increasing tuition expenses across most institutions cannot be justified by the value of the educational “product” that has resulted in crippling student indebtedness (Selingo, 2013). College and university administrators have grown accustomed to implementing annual tuition increases rather than finding opportunities to reduce expenses (Vedder, 2004). The ongoing tuition increases have resulted in politicians and the general public questioning whether a college or university degree is accessible and affordable (Zemsky, 2013).

Since 1985, tuition costs have been increasing at a rate higher than inflation and average family levels of income, even though individual students are paying an increasing percentage of costs (Baum & Ma, 2013; Blumenstyk, 2014b). The “sticker” price for college tuition has increased between 1971 and 2013 by more than three times the inflation rate (Blumenstyk, 2014b). In 2013, the average tuition increase of 2.9% at public 4-year institutions was the smallest increase in more than 30 years and compared to an average increase of 4.2% during the previous decade (Baum & Ma, 2013). Despite

a smaller than usual tuition increase in 2013, overall costs for students increased because government grant aid was either maintained or reduced (Baum & Ma, 2013). The average net price at 4-year private institutions increased 69% after inflation between 1993 and 2013 (Blumenstyk, 2014b). During the same time period, the average net price at 4-year public institutions reflected a 53% increase (Blumenstyk, 2014b). The increasing price of obtaining a college education has led critics to argue that costs have reached an unsustainable level for students and families (Vedder & Gillen, 2011). This section first addresses the tuition costs as experienced by students and families, followed by an explanation of the institutional costs that confront administrators.

Financing for students. The financing required to obtain a college or university degree has shifted dramatically in recent decades (Chen & Wiederspan, 2014); whereas college costs were previously carried primarily by the collective society, students and their families are now responsible for the majority of costs (Chen & St. John, 2011; Chen & Wiederspan, 2014; Paulsen & St. John, 2002; Tierney & Venegas, 2009). This adjustment is due in part from a change in the balance of financial aid from grants to loans and income-based scholarships to merit aid (Chen & St. John, 2011; Chen & Wiederspan, 2014; Paulsen & St. John, 2002; Tierney & Venegas, 2009). In 1992, for example, 65% of financial aid funds provided to undergraduate students were in the form of grants, compared to 52% of financial aid funds in 2013 (Baum & Payea, 2013).

Undergraduate students at private, non-profit institutions have incurred increasing amounts of debt, with an increase from 48.5% of undergraduate students in 1995 to 58.9% of undergraduate students in 2008 taking out loans (Chen & Wiederspan, 2014). The average loan amount for 1 year at private, non-profit institutions increased during the

same timeframe from \$4,300 to \$9,100 (Chen & Wiederspan, 2014). Relatedly, the average debt load for students who graduated from college in 2011 was \$26,600, an increase of 5% from the previous year (Baum & Payea, 2013; Chen & Wiederspan, 2014). The availability of government funding through loans has desensitized some students and families to higher education costs, given that the payment of tuition expenses is essentially deferred (Vedder, 2004). However, as students have increasingly relied on loans, more people are encountering difficulties in repaying their debt (Cunningham & Kienzl, 2011). Among individuals who began repaying federal student loans in 2010, 10% had already defaulted by 2012, the highest cohort default rate since 1995 (Baum & Payea, 2013).

Increasing numbers of students, family members, and government officials have recently become more vocal about the costs of higher education (Bruininks et al., 2010). University financial aid policies and the availability of government funding have a significant impact on the types of institutions students consider attending, along with persistence rates following enrollment (St. John, 2000). Some students have demonstrated increased price sensitivity; as tuition costs rise at private institutions, enrollments decrease correspondingly, particularly among low-income individuals (Tierney & Venegas, 2009; Vedder, 2004). The combination of increasing tuition rates, student and family responsibility for expenses, and increased debt levels have placed higher fiscal burdens on students, resulting in greater attention being given to college and university expenses and the efficient use of resources.

College and university expenses. As tuition costs for students increase, the public has raised questions about the expenses of operating a higher education institution.

Detractors of current higher education practices have addressed issues, including the production levels of faculty, administrative “bloat,” and the expense of new building projects on campuses (Selingo, 2013; Zemsky, 2013). College and university leaders have been confronted with three particular issues that impact institutional expenses: institutional financial aid, external cost pressures, and determining appropriate personnel production levels.

First, administrators have recognized that higher amounts of student financial aid, particularly in the form of scholarships, contribute to a corresponding growth in enrollment figures (Tierney & Venegas, 2009). Many colleges and universities have responded by awarding increased institutional discounts to students, an attractive practice due to increased enrollment but that also reduces net revenue and challenges long-term financial viability (Brewer & Tierney, 2012; Tierney & Venegas, 2009). However, the economies of higher education have been structured on systems that rely on third-party payment, primarily through the government providing loans (Vedder, 2004). Thus, institutional leaders have experienced minimal motivation to reduce tuition costs or institutional expenses because of the availability of loans, grants, and tax credits for students and families (Vedder, 2004).

Second, external cost realities have added to the burgeoning cost of higher education. For example, government regulations have contributed to the evolution of postsecondary institutions into complex organizations (Calderon & Mathies, 2013). College and university leaders have argued that tuition costs increase in part due to the need to remain in compliance with government legislation (Kirk, 2014). Although the compliance mechanisms related to health and safety regulations are expensive to

maintain, college and university leaders have little choice, given access to governmental funding requires such compliance (Gumport, 2000). Similarly, the regulations passed by national or state legislatures, such as the Clery Act or state authorizations for online education programs, frequently result from legitimate concerns (Kirk, 2014). In both of these areas and others, tuition increases help offset the costs associated with hiring additional personnel to meet institutional obligations as determined by the federal government (Kirk, 2014). Additionally, institutional leaders are confronted with the budgetary challenges of rising costs for employee health care (Bruininks et al., 2010).

A third factor impacting the cost of delivering higher education is the difficulty within the system to improve productivity levels of personnel (Vedder, 2004). Critics have argued that higher education institutions have generally chosen to increase expenses rather than identify opportunities for efficient practices to contain costs (Selingo, 2013). Politicians and the general public have communicated expectations for higher education institutions to deliver high quality education more quickly and less expensively (Schejbal, 2012). Vedder (2004) argued that because universities have not been subjected to competitive markets, there has been little incentive to identify opportunities for efficiencies or innovation. The classroom experience of most current students provides one example of minimal changes to the higher education system (Schejbal, 2012). Many higher education professors follow a lecture classroom model, while other industries have tapped technological advances to uphold quality with higher levels of efficiency due to technological advances (Schejbal, 2012).

In summary, college and university administrators and faculty are confronted with a scenario in which government leaders, students, and families are questioning tuition

costs as well as the efficient use of institutional resources. The institutional pressures to respond to concerns about tuition costs and institutional expenses correlates with a general expectation that higher education will be accessible and affordable. Meeting these expectations may become more difficult as national demographics continue to change. With increased diversity among the types of students attending higher education institutions, the price sensitivity of students and families may prompt college and university leaders to reconsider fiscal structures (Vedder, 2004). The next section addresses the pressure demographic changes in the national population and higher education enrollment is placing on administrators and faculty.

Changing Demographics

The number of students enrolling in colleges and universities, along with the diversity of individuals represented, has increased dramatically during recent decades (Hrabowski, 2014; White & Lowenthal, 2011). Students and families at lower socioeconomic levels have recognized that obtaining a degree increases the potential to join the middle or upper classes (Hrabowski, 2014; White & Lowenthal, 2011). Students now represent various types of diversity, including ethnicity, cultural, academic preparedness, age, religion, sexual orientation, family background, culture, language, physical ability, and socioeconomic levels (White & Lowenthal, 2011). A significant challenge for administrators and faculty is to ensure students from all backgrounds have the opportunity to succeed in the higher education context. This section outlines how student demographics and technological advances are changing the expectations placed upon colleges and universities.

Student demographics. The population of students attending colleges and universities has diversified significantly, particularly given the increasing number of ethnic minority and non-traditional learners entering the higher education system (Bruininks et al., 2010). These shifts in the composition of entering students have helped colleges and universities to more accurately reflect the demographic trends of the nation (Bruininks et al., 2010). A diverse population provides educational benefits for students because of the significant differences among people they encounter in society (Hurtado, 2008). Designing and delivering accelerated and online programs that allow individuals to maintain employment have increased the ability of colleges and universities to serve non-traditional students (Brewer & Tierney, 2012). This section introduces how colleges and universities are encountering changes due to the shift in student demographics among ethnic minority populations and non-traditional students.

First, as ethnic minority populations have increased in the United States along with higher rates of immigration, the personnel at colleges and universities have been challenged to identify and implement strategies for serving all types of students (Bruininks et al., 2010; Lester, 2006). As an example of changing trends, the enrollment of African American undergraduates has doubled since 1976 to nearly 2 million students (Strayhorn, 2011). In addition, the enrollment of Hispanic students in any higher education program reached nearly 3 million in 2012, up from 782,000 in 1990 (Blumenstyk, 2014b). It is anticipated that ethnic minority students, defined as Blacks, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders, will comprise 45% of the students graduating from high school in 2020, compared to 39% in 2009 (Blumenstyk, 2014b). However, the challenges faced by underrepresented students in navigating the higher

education system can limit the potential for student persistence and graduation (Cabrera, Burkum, La Nasa, & Bibo, 2012; Schreiner, Noel, Anderson, & Cantwell, 2011). Despite increased resources for personnel development to improve institutional effectiveness in working with underrepresented students, enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates continue to demonstrate an achievement gap (Hrabowski, 2014). For example, in 2007, African American, Native American, Alaska Native, and Hispanic and Latino students comprised almost 40% of the population at the K-12 level, yet only 26% of higher education enrollment (Hrabowski, 2014). The national goals established by President Obama in 2009 for increasing college graduates requires continuing to provide access as well as improving persistence and graduate rates for students who have previously been underrepresented, including underperforming individuals, minority or immigrant students, or individuals from low socioeconomic levels (Bruininks et al., 2010). Educational leaders will also need to continue development of programs and services for non-traditional students.

The increasing number of non-traditional students, including adult and part-time learners, has changed higher education demographics in recent years (Brewer & Tierney, 2012). Approximately 80% of college students commute to their campus, 45% of undergraduate students attend community colleges, and 60% of students attend at least two institutions before graduating (Laitinen, 2013). At many colleges and universities, “students are more likely to be older, working, attending part-time, and learning outside of traditional credit-bearing classrooms than students in the past” (Laitinen, 2013, p. 63). For example, adult students have represented a growing population for more than 3 decades, and the number of college students who are age 25 years or older is projected to

increase through the current decade (Aslanian & Giles, 2009; Soares, 2013). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2014), the enrollment of students who are 25 years or older increased by 35% between 2000 and 2011. Although the pace of enrollment has slightly declined in recent years, the National Center for Education Statistics projects that enrollment of students who are age 25 years or older will increase by 14% by 2021. For-profit institutions continue to serve primarily adult and commuter students, although enrollment has declined in recent years as a result of increased government scrutiny (Lipka, 2014). Total enrollment at for-profit institutions in the fall of 2014 still exceeded 1.3 million students, which is nearly 7% of total U.S. higher education enrollment (National Student Clearinghouse, 2014a).

The traditional concept of residential students attending colleges and universities is inconsistent with the diversity of backgrounds represented among undergraduate populations (Laitinen, 2013; Tinto, 2012). Rather than the idealized image of a well-prepared, 18-year-old high school graduate moving into a residence hall for 4 years of study, more than 37% of students now fit non-traditional descriptions and enroll in campus-wide programs (Laitinen, 2013; National Student Clearinghouse, 2014a). Developments in non-traditional forms of education, such as accelerated or online formats, have provided increased access to higher education for underrepresented populations (Calderon & Mathies, 2013). Many of these academic program developments were made possible by technological advances.

Technological advances. With the rapid development of new technologies in recent decades, there have been several impacts on the higher education landscape. Enrollments in online programs and courses have increased dramatically, expectations for

faculty engagement with technology have altered the teaching experience, and the “digital native” generation of students is now enrolled at colleges and universities.

First, student enrollment in online programs and courses has demonstrated ongoing growth, as public and non-profit colleges and universities increase course and program availability. As of fall 2010, 2.78 million students were enrolled in a fully online program, representing approximately 14% of all higher education enrollments (Aslanian & Clinefelter, 2012). In addition, more than 6 million students were taking at least one online course (Aslanian & Clinefelter, 2012). The trend of increasing enrollments, during which higher education institutions have expanded program offerings to millions of students primarily through non-traditional program offerings, raises concern from some academics about the value of education conducted in such settings (Hornsby & Osman, 2014).

Second, technological advances have adjusted expectations for faculty due to the development of digital communication tools and expansion of Internet resources (Greenhow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009). With the introduction of learning management systems and online courses, as well as increased expectations for implementing technology in the classroom, the role of teaching in higher education has changed. The successful implementation of technological tools has an impact on the learning experience of students, whether in an online, accelerated, or traditional delivery model. DeMillo (2012) argued that advances in technology will continue to impact teaching, such as through the increased potential for individualized learning:

Technology [can] deliver personalized experiences on a massive scale. [It] has already fomented revolutions in health care, government, manufacturing,

marketing... and it would be a strange quirk of the universe if somehow education were exempt.... The rapid appearances of massive [numbers of] online courses, online-learning communities, and open courseware points to a renewed quest for a more tailored, individualized approach to higher education. (para. 10-11)

Some millennial students are demonstrating preferences for a customized educational approach similar to strategies that have proven effective for adults (Soares, 2013). As the pace of technological advances continues, faculty and administrators will experience pressure for appropriate implementation in educational settings.

Third, more college and university students were born after 1980, when social digital technologies started to become available and accessing information became easier (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Wagner & Kegan, 2006). This generation of students is commonly referred to as digital natives because of their comfort with various technologies and willingness to connect with other people through electronic options (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Wagner & Kegan, 2006). As an increasing number of students with advanced technical abilities enroll at colleges and universities, administrators and faculty are encountering individuals who regularly interact through social networking sites rather than email or face-to-face interactions (Greenhow et al., 2009). Students are expressing increasing discontent with teachers and professors who fail to engage with social media channels that allow sharing numerous types of media, exchange messages, develop groups, and interact with people in varied locations and formats (Greenhow et al., 2009).

Developing technical skills is an essential requirement for students, as employers expect students to demonstrate capacities for innovation, collaboration, problem

identification, and resolution in dynamic and digital settings (Greenhow et al., 2009). However, the technological requirements and expectations for all types of academic programs, whether online or residential, do put some students at a disadvantage as digital demands increase (Relles & Tierney, 2013). Technological proficiency levels are generally separated by class, race, and gender, so students with a minimal level of skills may miss out on important influences, such as emailing with a professor, or institutional infrastructures, such as researching through online library resources (Relles & Tierney, 2013). These important technical skills can contribute to reduced levels of academic achievement (Relles & Tierney, 2013).

In summary, colleges and universities are enrolling an increasingly diverse population of students that includes students from various ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic levels. Many students are also pursuing their higher education goals as non-traditional students and maintaining responsibilities that include work, family life, and community obligations. Simultaneously, technological advances have changed the delivery model of many academic programs through the development of online programs and increased expectations for faculty regarding the incorporation of digital tools with teaching approaches. Finally, although many students come to college with advanced technological abilities, others have limited prowess due to economic gaps. In this climate, colleges and universities are expected to serve all students. Yet, the failure of colleges and universities to reach anticipated levels of student success and learning outcomes is another current pressure on the higher education system.

Student Success and Outcomes

Individuals who complete a college degree experience meaningful benefits, including higher levels of health and economic opportunities, which also contribute to an improved society (Hornsby & Osman, 2014). Unfortunately, completion rates for U.S. citizens have declined since 1995 compared to other countries (Bruininks et al., 2010). Although the United States continues to spend the most money per student on post-secondary education, other nations are more successful at graduating students (Bruininks et al., 2010). Access to higher education has dramatically increased in recent decades, but completion rates have remained static, with just over half of all entering students completing a college degree within 6 years of entry (Hrabowski, 2014; Tinto, 2012). This section describes three critiques of higher education: retention and graduation rates, learning outcomes, and the value of a degree.

Retention and graduation rates. The benefits accrued from higher education are related to degree completion, so increased retention levels benefit individual students, institutions, and society (Tinto, 2012). The national interest in this subject is partially driven from the income benefits college graduates achieve, along with numerous other social issues, including voting, health, unemployment, poverty, rates of incarceration, and school readiness of children, that are positively associated with a college degree (Tinto, 2012). However, retention and graduation rates for colleges and universities have provided ongoing issues of concern. For example, among the students who entered the higher education system in the fall of 2012, 68.7% returned to any college or university in the fall of 2013 (National Student Clearinghouse, 2014b). At individual colleges and universities, 58.2% of students returned to the same institution (National Student

Clearinghouse, 2014b). In addition, the graduation rate for students completing their degree within 6 years has stubbornly remained at slightly over 50% (Hrabowski, 2014; Tinto, 2012). The completion rates for underrepresented minority students are particularly low, with 39% of Native American students, 41% of African-American students, and 47% of Latino students completing degrees within 6 years (Hrabowski, 2014).

The high attrition rate in the higher education system initiates questions about whether too many unprepared students are entering colleges and universities or if the higher education system is failing individuals (Vedder & Gillen, 2011). Although more students are entering the higher education system, an increasing number are not prepared for college level academic work (Arum & Roksa, 2011). Approximately 35% of students who enter colleges and universities require compulsory or remedial coursework (Relles & Tierney, 2013; Strayhorn, 2011). Less than 50% of high school graduates who come from a family background without college experience are prepared for higher education academic work (Arum & Roksa, 2011). Students who enter the higher education system unprepared have drastically reduced possibilities for eventual degree completion (Relles & Tierney, 2013; Strayhorn, 2011). For example, only 17% of students who enter a remedial English course ultimately complete a bachelor's degree (Relles & Tierney, 2013). Remedial courses help demonstrate some of the demographic challenges confronting colleges and universities, as higher percentages of low income and minority students are represented in the courses than overall enrollments (Relles & Tierney, 2013). Colleges and universities are still expected to serve underprepared students due to the national emphasis on access and completion by government leaders and the general

public. Even with the increasing numbers of students who lack preparation for college level work, there are also pressing concerns about the learning outcomes among students who are retained.

Learning outcomes. Along with disappointing retention and graduation rates, critics are raising questions about the learning that occurs during a higher education experience (Selingo, 2013; Zemsky, 2013). Recent research has demonstrated minimal advancements among students with critical thinking and complex reasoning skills during the years of college attendance (Arum & Roksa, 2011). Despite the established goals of higher education to teach students to think critically and communicate effectively, Arum and Roksa (2011) argued that “many students are only minimally improving their skills in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing during their journeys through higher education” (p. 35). Arum and Roksa found that more than 45% of students make no statistically significant gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing skills. In addition, the learning outcomes achieved by students have decreased with more frequency in recent decades (Arum & Roksa, 2011).

There are numerous issues contributing to these trends, including multiple studies showing students report devoting only about 12 hours each week to studying (Arum & Roksa, 2011). Arum and Roksa (2011) stated, “While prior historical scholarship reminds us that U.S. undergraduates have long been devoted to pursuing social interests at college, there is emerging empirical evidence that suggests that college students’ academic effort has dramatically declined in recent decades” (p. 3). Another contributor is the systematic emphasis placed on research over teaching at most higher education institutions (Arum & Roksa, 2011). Faculty are incentivized to direct energy and time

toward research to secure promotions and achieve recognition within their scholarly guild (Arum & Roksa, 2011). Concerns about the learning that occurs at colleges and universities associated with the high cost of tuition, have subsequently created questions from the general public about the current value of a bachelor's degree.

Value of a degree. The value students perceive from their higher education experience is contextualized by the attitudes and beliefs that have been formed by their family, friends, community, and school (Paulsen & St. John, 2002). In recent decades, the perception of obtaining a college degree in the United States has transitioned from potentially providing a better life to a necessity for accessing numerous benefits, including levels of personal and professional freedom as well as achieving a middle-class or higher standard of living (Cabrera et al., 2012; Lester, 2006; White & Lowenthal, 2011). However, rising tuition levels have contributed to increasing expectations from students and families for quality job placement opportunities or career advancement upon graduation (Martin & Samels, 2009). In recent years, increasing numbers of college graduates have been unable to find employment that utilizes their earned degree (Vedder & Gillen, 2011). For example, as of 2008, more than 17 million college graduates were working in positions that did not require a bachelor's degree (Vedder & Gillen, 2011). In addition, the underemployment rate for undergraduate students increased from 10% to 19% between 2000 and 2012 (Chen & Wiederspan, 2014). These types of concerns are prompting increasing numbers of politicians, students, and families to ask whether the benefits of a college degree are greater than the tuition costs.

In summary, this section outlined disappointing trends related to retention trends, graduation rates, and learning outcomes, along with questions about the value of a

degree. Due to these concerns, politicians, non-profit organization leaders, and the general public have called for increased accountability for the higher education sector (Wildavsky et al., 2012). The following section introduces the scrutiny directed at colleges and universities as well as new measures of accountability.

Increased Scrutiny and Accountability

Government leaders and the general public are questioning the value of a college or university experience with increasing frequency (Bruininks et al., 2010). Critics of higher education are leading more politicians to search for solutions that include accountability and transparency from higher education (Bruininks et al., 2010; Vedder, 2004). For example, the 2006 Commission on the Future of Higher Education issued a report that included recommendations for federal government oversight of the accreditation process along with a need to restructure the financial aid system (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

One common theme communicated by politicians and the media is that the U.S. higher education system is falling behind the rest of the world, as marked by comparisons with other countries graduating a higher percentage of students (Hrabowski, 2014). The percentage of people living in the United States who are age 25 years or older and have a college degree is still under 30% and trailing countries like South Korea, Japan, and Canada that project more than half of adults having completed college degrees by 2025 (Hrabowski, 2014). In response to these concerns, President Obama announced the American Graduation Initiative in 2009, establishing a goal for the United States to reach the highest proportion of college graduates by 2020 (Hrabowski, 2014). In addition, politicians and the general public have increasingly voiced concerns about whether

colleges and universities are efficiently using resources (Calderon & Mathies, 2013). As tuition costs have increased, along with the subsidies provided by the government through grants and loans, more public resources have been consumed by the higher education system (Vedder, 2004).

The federal government has instituted several mechanisms in recent years to evaluate the higher education system (Kelderman, 2014). Several regulations were implemented due to concerns about proprietary colleges and universities, but impact private and state institutions. For example, credit hours have been linked to time in class, states require authorization to enroll students in online programs, and colleges are evaluated by earnings of graduates. In addition, the Department of Education is finalizing a ratings system to measure the effectiveness of colleges and universities. The accountability required for federal and state government funding and other external entities necessitates additional reporting measures for institutions, which will likely continue into the future (Calderon & Mathies, 2013; Kelderman, 2014). Higher education funding by federal and state governments is increasingly reliant on outcomes, such as student performance, teaching indicators, and research results rather than solely the input of student enrollment (Calderon & Mathies, 2013).

The pressures outlined in this literature review have become a common part of the public discourse and describe ongoing and long-term alterations to the environment in which higher education institutions operate, rather than short-term challenges (Bruininks et al., 2010). As reflected in the literature, there is no indication that the current pressures on higher education, including technological advancements and altered revenue streams, will recede in the foreseeable future (Wildavsky et al., 2012). Numerous constituencies,

including board members, administrators, faculty members, policymakers, staff, and students, believe change is needed within the higher education system (Kezar, 2009). Colleges and universities will be required to change due to the pressures converging on the higher education paradigm (Schejbal, 2012). For example, academic leaders will be challenged to create a vibrant entrepreneurial mindset to become more fiscally sound (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). However, one of the challenges confronting higher education is that entrepreneurial activity, and the willingness to accept the attendant risks is more frequently found in the business sector (Mueller & Thomas, 2001). These types of challenges create a scenario in which reinvention, rather than improvement or reform, is the appropriate response (Wagner & Kegan, 2006). Thus, college and university leaders are confronted with a critical time to initiate significant change (Wildavsky et al., 2012).

Improving an education system requires expanding beyond typical attempts at improvement that occur within administrator and faculty regular responsibilities and activities (Wagner & Kegan, 2006). Responding to current challenges will require higher education institutions to develop and implement structural and deep changes (Bruininks et al., 2010; Lueddeke, 1999). In addition, colleges and universities will be confronted with ongoing pressures to evolve based on the current trends and challenges encountered, shaping the future of student, faculty, and administrator experiences (Calderon & Mathies, 2013). Historically, external factors have most frequently forced changes at higher education institutions, particularly adjustments to approaches that do not align with traditions in the field (Clark, 2004; Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Kezar, 2009; Kondakci & Van den Broeck, 2009). Unfortunately, repeated attempts at implementing change initiatives can result in a level of organizational inertia, so successful change models are

needed (Kezar, 2009). The ability for higher education institutions to adapt and redefine the educational experience for those they are to serve will prove to be critical for survival and thriving into future decades (Gumport, 2000). The next section introduces higher education change models, followed by an explanation of the adaptive change concept and the environmental factors conducive to such an approach to change.

Change Models and Higher Education

College and university leaders must adapt to a context in which politicians, students, and families perceive higher education more critically and with increased expectations related to service, value, and outcomes (Bruininks et al., 2010). The motivation and process by which colleges and universities implement change have provided a significant concern for higher education researchers (Kondakci & Van den Broeck, 2009). Colleges and universities have historically been protected from significant change because the institutions were established during the pre-modern era (Lueddeke, 1999). Because of the time during which the higher education system developed, institutional cultures, structures of work, belief, and authority often have become established and entrenched (Clark, 1983). Thus, constraints on change become centered within the system or individual institutions (Clark, 1983).

Attempts at change within colleges and universities have included authoritarian styles, centralized management strategies, and hurried planning interventions after years of neglect (Lueddeke, 1999). Implementing successful change initiatives in higher education settings has proven to be difficult because institutions are “characterized as value-driven organizations, loosely coupled systems, inhabiting multiple power and authority structures, possessing collegial culture, complex decision-making structure,

having ambiguous goals, employing tenured staff, and relatively independent of the environment” (Kondakci & Van den Broeck, 2009, p. 440). Reforms within higher education have historically occurred at a slow pace, often because colleges and universities include several constituencies in decision-making processes (Gumport, 2000; Lueddeke, 1999).

An organization that fails to adapt has embarked on the process of a slow death and reflects a disconnection from reality (Quinn, 1996). Colleges and universities that are able to commit to significant and ongoing change that occurs for a full decade evolve into institutions that are able to sustain transformations into the future (Clark, 2004). Higher education institutions instead often implement incremental adjustments duplicated from other colleges and universities (Wildavsky et al., 2012). Quinn (1996) argued for more substantial transformation and states that deep change “requires new ways of thinking and behaving... is major in scope, discontinuous with the past and generally irreversible” (p. 3).

Over the course of time, numerous iterations of change models associated with higher education have been developed, with each theory describing varied motivations, methods, and results in higher education contexts (Kezar, 2001). The most common change models emphasize leadership style, a teleological approach, or an evolutionary perspective. The leadership style focuses on the expertise and skills of individuals leading organizations, the teleological tactic promotes planned change or scientific methods, and the evolutionary model emphasizes the impact of circumstances leading to adaptive change. Critiques of these theories have contributed to the development of new approaches, including social cognition, dialectical, and cultural models. Because this

study focuses on the characteristics of exemplar institutions that have consistently created and implemented adaptive solutions to significant challenges, the following section provides an overview of several prominent change models that have been implemented in higher education settings, with a discussion of individual change management style, planned change, social cognition, and cultural models.

Individual Change Management Style

Change management theories that center on the role of an individual leader to identify and implement initiatives are based on the trait approach to leadership (Northouse, 2010). According to Northouse (2010), leadership can be defined as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 3). The trait theory focuses on particular qualities or characteristics that enable individual leaders in various fields to experience success. The traits most commonly identified as contributing to effective leadership are intelligence, integrity, self-confidence, sociability, and determination.

An example of the trait approach is found in the research of common characteristics among individuals identified as disruptive innovators, primarily in the business field (Dyer, Gregersen, & Christensen, 2011). Based on their research, Dyer et al. (2011) stated that “one’s ability to generate innovative ideas is not merely a function of the mind, but also a function of behaviors” (p. 3). The common behaviors exhibited by disruptive innovators are associating, questioning, observing, networking, and experimenting. First, associating is the ability of individuals to synthesize information in a way to make connections across seemingly unrelated questions, problems, or ideas. Second, questioning reflects a desire for inquiry and skill of discovering new possibilities

by asking questions. Third, observing is a skill to evaluate people, process, and organizations to develop insights for new approaches. Fourth, networking is a commitment to find new ideas by engaging a wide variety of individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Finally, experimenting is a consistent willingness to pilot ideas and engage new experiences along with a willingness to test hypotheses before making final decisions.

The research on disruptive innovators can be evaluated in comparison to higher education research. The literature on individual change management styles does not indicate an ideal form of leadership (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). Individuals can maximize their efforts by understanding varied approaches to change management that fit specific contexts, as well as potential ways to complement personal strengths, weaknesses, and style. Pursuing change in the higher education setting presents unique challenges because of the “distinctive combination of goals, tasks, employees, governance structures, values, technologies, and history” (Bolman & Gallos, 2011, p. 5) represented at an institution. Thus, implementing change theories should expand beyond individual approaches to be more inclusive, such as through the planned change model.

Planned Change

The planned change model is based on the assumption that as a leader provides guidance, an organization can demonstrate adaptability and achieve a collective purpose (Kezar, 2001). Individuals or organizations who implement this theory emphasize strategic planning, organizational development, and adaptive learning tactics. Successful and useful change requires a multistep process that is greater than inertia existent in a

group or organization (Kotter, 1996). Simultaneously, high-quality leadership is required to implement effective change. How a leader operates within this model is essential, as planning, analyzing, and assessing are key activities (Kezar, 2001). These leadership activities can be difficult because organizations tend to reward managerial behaviors that focus on bureaucracy and the internal organization (Kotter, 1996). Institutions that successfully implement planned change initiatives demonstrate a value for leaders who analyze external threats along with new opportunities and strategies.

An initial example of planned change is strategic planning, developed in the 1960s and significantly influenced business leaders who wanted to increase the competitive abilities of each unit within their corporations (Mintzberg, 1994). Strategic planning emphasized the role of organizational leaders who could provide direction for middle managers to implement. Although the strategic planning approach provided important data for decision-making processes, many organizations also experienced failure after implementing the model. For example, planners often lacked essential information because they excluded managers and other employees who were engaged in daily business activities.

Kotter's (1996) planned change model was developed for business contexts but is frequently referenced in higher education change literature. Kotter described eight distinct stages that are necessary for leading change within an organization. First, leaders must establish a sense of urgency to compel activity toward change. A sense of urgency also generates cooperation from people who have power and credibility within an organization. Second, a powerful guiding coalition must be formed to eliminate organizational obstacles, demonstrate wins, and achieve significant change. This team

needs to include the right people within an organization who are trusted and share a common objective. Third, a compelling vision is necessary to provide a desired future goal, motivate action, and coordinate the activities of people within the organization in a common direction. Fourth, the vision must be communicated concisely and regularly throughout the organization. Fifth, the employees within an organization should be empowered to act on the vision. Sixth, planning for and creating short-term wins provide evidence of organizational progress and generate momentum. In addition, short-term wins create opportunities for rewarding change agents and identification of improvements that can be made to the change initiative. Seventh, after identifying improvements, additional effort must be devoted to increasing the momentum of the change initiative. Increased resources and leadership from a senior level is essential for ongoing and successful change. The eighth and final stage is to institutionalize new approaches by intentionally working toward long-term changes in the behavioral norms and shared values reflected by organizational culture. People may want to bypass one or more stages to produce results quickly. However, each stage is required for success because of the momentum for change that can be developed in a natural manner.

New structures or organizing principles result from the planned change model, primarily due to the work of change agents and leaders (Kezar, 2001). A successful change initiative includes establishing a direction, aligning people with goals, and motivating and inspiring constituencies (Kotter, 1996). Executing a plan still requires a transformation process with several phases, each of which requires a significant amount of time to be fully implemented (Kotter, 2007). Although the planned change model broadens participants in the process, it suggests a linear approach that does not

intentionally incorporate the learning required for organizational change. The following model, social cognition, proposes that change and learning are directly correlated.

Social Cognition

In recent decades, phenomenological and social-constructivist perspectives on organizations have contributed to the development of social cognition change models (Kezar, 2001). This approach focuses on the relationship between change and learning, particularly how people respond to cognitive dissonance. When people perceive contrasting values within an organization or understand current work activities are outdated, they are willing to accept change. Thus, change is not linear but a series of interconnected processes resulting in a new worldview.

Social cognition models rely on the concept of cognitive frames, which evaluate the asked questions, collected information, defined problems, and follow-up activities within an organization (Bensimon, 2005). Awareness of cognitive frames is essential because of an understanding of the issues that can become visible and those that are not perceived due to exclusion from the frames. Understanding the learning that needs to occur opens the possibility for double-loop learning, which addresses change in underlying norms, beliefs, and principles. Single-loop learning, which addresses change at a surface level, can be associated with technical approaches.

A prominent social cognition change model is the learning organization, primarily developed for the business world to address dynamic challenges through the capabilities of their people (Senge, 2006). Senge (2006) described learning organizations as places “where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is

set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together” (p. 3). A learning organization incorporates the strengths of people throughout the institution. This type of organizational environment is possible because of people’s natural desire to learn.

Senge (2006) identified five dimensions necessary to integrate within a learning organization. First, systems thinking reflects the recognition that various interrelated factors that are seemingly invisible impact an entire organization. Applying systems thinking helps people identify patterns that form a system and develop appropriate responses. A systemic approach is essential for incorporating the other dimensions. Second, personal mastery demonstrates a level of proficiency that results from a commitment to lifelong learning. A learning organization encourages personal mastery through a commitment to helping all of its people learn and grow. Third, learning organizations have a thorough understanding of mental models and the impact on activities such as entering new markets or business practices. Senge defined mental models as “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action” (p. 8). Fourth, leaders within a learning organization build a compelling and shared vision that people throughout an organization are committed to fulfilling. A genuine and shared vision motivates people to learn and excel in their work. The fifth dimension of a learning organization is team learning, which generates results more quickly than individuals working alone.

The social cognition approach to change can align well with higher education settings because of the emphasis on learning. Bolman and Deal (1991) emphasized that people functioning in different roles throughout an institution will view organizational

change based on their reality. Individuals can lead change by helping employees in diverse parts of an organization understand various perspectives on an issue, thus resulting in greater willingness to work toward desired adjustments (Bolman & Deal, 1991). Social cognition models involve people from all divisions of an institution in transformation initiatives and increase their understanding of the change process itself (Kezar, 2001). The final model discussed in this section, cultural change, introduces the realities that organizational culture can contribute to or detract from the change process.

Cultural Model

Many change models are based on an assumption that activities within institutions and organizations occur due to rational planning, but cultural models recognize the irrationality, fluidity, and complexity of organizations (Kezar, 2001; Kezar et al., 2006). Defining culture begins at a broad level in attempting to understand the learned behaviors, common values, and norms that guide and impact experiences within a society (Mueller & Thomas, 2001). Schein (2010) described culture as a current dynamic phenomenon and a fundamental background structure that consistently influences how people act. Cultural influences contain significant power, yet they often are not observed or understood (Schein, 2010). Mueller and Thomas (2001) defined culture as “the underlying system of values peculiar to a specific group or society, shapes the development of certain personality traits, and motivates individuals in a society to engage in behaviors that may not be as prevalent in other societies” (p. 58). Schein emphasized the learning and evolutionary elements of cultures as groups of people adapt to problems by identifying valid solutions that are then taught to new members.

The impact of culture can be identified through common but often unrecognized patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting that are similar to mental programs (Hofstede et al., 2010; Schein, 2010). Evaluating some behaviors, such as formal rituals, can reflect cultural assumptions, but additional work is needed to understand how people perceive, think, and feel within an organization (Schein, 2010). Culture can shape the way people attach meaning to experiences, make choices, and determine values for behavior (Mueller & Thomas, 2001). Meaning and values are most frequently formed by the social environments that shape people's life experience (Hofstede et al., 2010). Because common social experiences, including common perceptions, actions, and feelings, impact responses within a culture, it frequently becomes possible to predict social behavior (Schein, 2010).

Understanding organizational culture can first be informed by evaluating the national culture in which an institution operates (Hofstede et al., 2010; Schein, 2010). For example, within an individualist culture like the United States, management focused on motivating and rewarding employees tends to be linked directly to singular performance (Hofstede et al., 2010). However, because people choose to join an organization, significant differences may exist between an organization and society (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Organizational culture can be defined as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organization from others” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 344). The strength and stability of an organizational culture varies based on when an institution was founded and the emotional intensity connected to its history (Schein, 2010). Highly successful organizations have developed a unique organizational culture

in which people understand and value the vision, mission, and activities of the institution (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Evaluating how culture has shaped the people and structures within an organization can also provide an understanding to reactions when individuals are impacted by changes (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008).

The cultural model emphasizes a slow pace of change, which occurs as people adapt to their environment (Kezar, 2001; Kezar et al., 2006). Attempts at transformation should be connected to the symbolic elements of an organization, including beliefs, values, myths, and rituals (Kezar, 2001; Kezar et al., 2006). For change to occur, there must be involvement from all parts of the organization, rather than just top levels of management (Kezar, 2001; Kezar et al., 2006). Senior leaders can help shape transformation through activities, such as developing the mission, creating new rituals or symbols, understanding current motivators, and communicating values and beliefs (Kezar, 2001; Kezar et al., 2006). The key factors that contribute to a strong organizational culture include reducing uncertainties, developing social order and continuity, identifying a common identity and community, and clearly communicating a vision for the future (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Initiating organizational change requires understanding the current culture, identifying a preferred culture, selecting stories to define the future culture, and determining an action agenda, small wins, leadership implications, metrics for accountability, and communication plan (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

This section has provided an overview of change models and higher education, with specific attention directed to individual change management styles, planned change, social cognition, and the model. The model applied for this study, adaptive change,

primarily relies on elements of cultural change because an organization's culture, including its stories, rituals, norms, and meeting practices, may define the corporate ability to adapt (Heifetz et al., 2009). Adaptive change also incorporates elements from individual change management styles, planned change, and social cognition models. The adaptive change model was selected for this study due to the focus on implementing long-term successful interventions and allowing changes to occur organically. Because of the current pressures on higher education, a need exists to identify and implement change models that allow effective and viable institutional environments for change.

Adaptive Change Model

The adaptive change model was developed due to a pragmatic desire to understand how the interactions between leadership, systems, and adaptation effect change (Heifetz et al., 2009). The model has been studied and implemented in various fields, including business, health care, early childhood education, and religion (Heifetz et al., 2009). The adaptive change model incorporates a scientific understanding of the evolutionary process as a basis for ongoing and positive change (Heifetz et al., 2009). This evolutionary process occurs as people within a group develop new learning (Schein, 2010). The transformation required to successfully respond to adaptive challenges results in evolving into a new organization (Wagner & Kegan, 2006).

Adaptive change is required when individuals' or organizations' deeply held beliefs are challenged, leaders realize previously successful values and approaches become less relevant, or when people recognize competing perspectives have emerged (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). This type of change is best understood as a pervasive, fluid, open-ended, and indivisible presence in an organization (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). More

frequently, change is described as an exceptional effect that only occurs with specific circumstances after leadership implemented by change agents (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). As varied challenges confront organizations resulting in changing institutional environments goals, the ability to adapt strategies and behaviors to create an ongoing capacity to thrive becomes essential (Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). Approaches to change work most effectively when adjustments can occur on a consistent basis (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Adaptive change can be described as an “ongoing process, a stream of interactions, and a flow of situated initiatives” (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002, p. 569).

The pressures currently confronting higher education present adaptive challenges, defined as audacious aspirations amid difficult realities (Heifetz et al., 2009). An adaptive challenge is momentous enough that current capabilities will not allow resolution, so transformation is required (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Adaptive challenges result from significant changes within societies, markets, customers, and competition that require organizations to refine values, create new strategies, and learn new ways to operate (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). Organizations unable to respond and adapt to these types of challenges will likely encounter the potential for disruption or extinction (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

Adaptive challenges are not easily solved by technical expertise or authoritative edict, even if people involved in the situation would prefer a clear set of guidelines or answers (Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). Resolving adaptive challenges requires creating new knowledge, skills, and tools during the course of working on a solution (Wagner & Kegan, 2006). Adaptive challenges can only be resolved by people

making changes to their priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). These adjustments are necessary because addressing adaptive challenges includes reconceiving commonly-held paradigms (Wagner & Kegan, 2006). In addition, solutions to adaptive challenges require the input, creativity, and collaboration of people throughout an organization (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). Individuals must develop skills of diagnosis and action to create and implement solutions to adaptive challenges (Heifetz et al., 2009). People should be able to evaluate the status of the organization and actions to provide solutions and their own potential role in the process (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Technical challenges can be solved with current expert knowledge, a singular decision by a senior leader, or current organizational structures or procedures (Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). Applying a technical solution to a problem assumes the skills for improvement are currently available within an organization or system (Wagner & Kegan, 2006). Choosing to focus on the technical elements of a change intervention, rather than considering how people might respond or be involved, is a frequent contributor to change attempts failing (Kondakci & Van den Broeck, 2009). Resolving a technical challenge may not be simple, but the knowledge and skills are already present (Wagner & Kegan, 2006). The routines and processes for a technical challenge may be difficult but have been proven (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Addressing technical challenges allows applying paradigms that have previously been developed and accepted (Wagner & Kegan, 2006). A frequent mistake leaders and organizations make is applying technical solutions to adaptive challenges (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Adequate responses to adaptive challenges can include technical solutions but will also require adaptive change, or new responses beyond current approaches (Heifetz et al., 2009).

The steps for adaptive change begin with data collection and problem identification, followed by interpretation, then identifying potential interventions that could provide solutions (Heifetz et al., 2009). Implementing adaptive solutions includes ...new forms of improvisational expertise, a kind of process expertise that knows prudently how to experiment with never-been-tried-before relationships, means of communication, and ways of interacting that will help people develop solutions that build upon and surpass the wisdom of today's experts. (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 2)

Implementing adaptive change requires time, which is similar to the evolutionary process that demonstrates incremental adjustments that contribute to long-term radical progress (Heifetz et al., 2009). Because change occurs as an unfolding process, time must be permitted for numerous possibilities to be explored (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Deep change within an organizational system typically requires more than 10 years for full implementation (Kezar, 2009). The following section describes four common characteristics of the adaptive change model: (a) challenges routines, (b) requires new learning, (c) includes broad involvement from people within the organization, and (d) resolves difficult problems.

Challenges Routines

The adaptive change model includes implementing new roles or making significant changes to values, beliefs, habits, relationships, behaviors, and approaches to work (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). These types of changes require challenging routines that have been developed and commonly accepted (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). A willingness to challenge and alter routines is

frequently found among people who engage in entrepreneurial activity (Mueller & Thomas, 2001). Even when people intend to implement change, the experience of taking action can be difficult (Wagner & Kegan, 2006). Therefore, a catalyst is often required to force people to accept a change in routines (Mueller & Thomas, 2001). Often the catalyst for challenging routines and creating new knowledge is a response to a new context or societal need (Wagner & Kegan, 2006). Some people may prefer to defer these difficult tasks to people in leadership positions, rather than changing comfortable routines or approaches (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

Because of the work required for making changes to closely held values, beliefs, and loyalties rather than solely intellectual analysis, responding to adaptive challenges can initiate intense emotions (Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). The distress people demonstrate when adjusting routines can result in responses demonstrating a seeming resistance to change, when in actuality they may experience a sense of loss (Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). People can experience change as a threat to their values, beliefs, or perspectives on how the world should operate (Heifetz et al., 2009). People are not necessarily opposed to change but can feel defenseless due to new and unknown dangers that create anxiety (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Resistance to adaptive change may be due to a desire to maintain current practices or views that are stable, predictable, and familiar (Heifetz et al., 2009). Bolman and Deal (1991) explained that change

...produces loss, particularly for those who are the targets rather than the initiators of change. Old patterns, familiar routines, and taken-for-granted meanings are all disrupted by organizational change. The deeper the loss, the more important it is

to create rituals of transition – opportunities to both celebrate and mourn the past and help people evolve new structures of meaning. (p. 401)

Implementing adaptive change requires that change agents attempt to understand the potential losses people may experience (Heifetz et al., 2009). The next characteristic, new learning, can also initiate some challenges for people throughout the process.

New Learning

Adaptive change requires the acquisition and implementation of new knowledge (Heifetz et al., 2009). In previous years, organizations could experience success with employees who worked collaboratively, completed assigned tasks, demonstrated loyalty, and followed instructions (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Today's adaptive challenges require people who can learn to think differently (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997; Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Identifying solutions to adaptive challenges requires generating new knowledge and a willingness by people throughout the organization to change (Wagner & Kegan, 2006). Organizations need people who “understand themselves and their world at a qualitatively higher level of mental complexity” (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 25).

Learning is initiated when an individual or group of people discover an error and implement an enduring correction (Argyris, 1997). Errors can be identified as a gap between stated values and actual activity. Thus, as Argyris (1997) stated, “learning occurs when people produce what they say they know” (p. 302). People may desire alignment between values and activities but lack the necessary skills or capacity (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). New learning can be motivated by a need for survival, growth, or adaptation within a current environment or required internal integration that allows daily functioning (Schein, 2010).

A learning environment should encourage inquiry and testing (Argyris, 1997). The pursuit of new learning requires an experimental framework, which includes opportunities for improvisation along with the time and resources to modify approaches (Heifetz et al., 2009). Frequently, change is stalled at a planning stage when producing results requires a focus on action (Argyris, 1997). Initiating activity allows realistic reasoning and determining the likelihood of achieving goals (Argyris, 1997). However, delaying action contributes to a false sense of certainty and the ability to resist evidence that could prove a theory untrue (Argyris, 1997).

The context for new learning should include an understanding that change brings different realities without creating an overwhelming environment that produces unrealistic expectations (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). The features demonstrated within organizations that promote learning include decentralization, trust between employees and supervisors, incentives and rewards, a learning culture, open communication and sharing of information, personnel development and training, and teams focused on research and inquiry (Kezar, 2005). For new learning to occur, people from diverse groups within organizations should interact and dialogue about competing perspectives and values (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). Differences among people, including experiences, assumptions, values, beliefs, and habit, provide the foundation for learning and change to occur (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). People must also have the opportunity to discuss problems that previously were perceived as potent (Argyris, 1997). A culture that values adaptive change will encourage diverse views and reduce the emphasis on central planning or individual leaders identifying solutions (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Along with the loss people can experience when routines are challenged, developing and implementing new learning can also be painful (Heifetz et al., 2009). Recognizing the need for learning is initiated by coming to awareness that the world's complexity is greater than one's current competency (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Individuals may demonstrate feelings of anxiety, incompetence, betrayal, defensiveness, or irrelevance when new approaches are required (Heifetz et al., 2009; Schein, 2010). Similar responses may also be reflected among groups if a culture highly values stability (Schein, 2010).

Learning is not solely based on obtaining new knowledge, skills, or abilities but also retaining the unique values and core competencies that contribute to an organization's strengths (Heifetz et al., 2009). Successful adaptation allows an organization to build on identity, traditions, and history to create new capacities for the future (Heifetz et al., 2009). This approach to learning encourages the third characteristic of adaptive change, which is broad involvement by people within an organization.

Broad Involvement in Organization

Obtaining solutions to adaptive challenges requires the collaboration of employees at all levels of an organization, including accessing the expertise of people in various departments, and learning how to implement potential solutions (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). The adaptive change model requires involvement and intelligence from numerous people within an organization rather than just individuals in leadership positions (Heifetz et al., 2009). This element of adaptive change can be challenging for people within an organization who are accustomed to individuals leading change by providing solutions (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). In particular, adaptive change requires the

ability for people at any level of an organization to communicate information, needs, and opportunities that will contribute to strategic decisions and actions (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). It can be challenging in some organizations to provide opportunities for people who are not in leadership position to influence change, or in other scenarios to encourage people to assume responsibilities not assigned to leadership roles (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). For organizations achieving adaptive change, leadership can be provided from any level and regardless of position (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). The final characteristic of the adaptive change model is that it requires the resolution of difficult problems.

Resolving Difficult Problems

Adaptive challenges by their nature are difficult to resolve, but people often feel pressure to identify and implement solutions quickly (Heifetz et al., 2009). The goal of adaptive changes is to enable thriving by building on the best historical approaches to help shape the future (Heifetz et al., 2009). It is important for people within an organization to understand the context and need for change, which should include understanding the organization's past, building on prior best practices, and analyzing the forces necessitating change to thrive in the future (Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). The adaptive change process of collecting data, interpreting the situation, and exploring potential interventions requires adequate time (Heifetz et al., 2009). Frequently, the task of diagnosis is not given enough priority because people are attempting to implement quick solutions and too closely involved with activities (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Environmental Characteristics Promoting Adaptive Change

The adaptive change model applies a scientific understanding of the evolutionary process to understand how the interactions between leadership, systems, and adaptation contribute to positive and effective change (Heifetz et al., 2009). The common characteristics present for an organization successfully implementing adaptive change are challenging routines, requiring new learning, broad involvement from people within the organization, and resolving difficult problems (Heifetz et al., 2009). The purpose of this research was to study the environmental characteristics of exemplar institutions that have consistently created and implemented adaptive solutions to significant challenges. To evaluate these characteristics, the environment of a university, a contributing factor to the organizational culture, was studied.

The environment of an institution can be understood as situated between the organizational culture and climate. As previously described, the organizational culture is a stable influence on people and has minimal malleability. The climate is less influential and can change on a regular basis. Schein (2010) described the climate of an organization as “the feeling that is conveyed in a group by the physical layout and the way in which members of the organization interact with each other, with customers, or with other outsiders” (p. 15). The climate of an organization represents the underlying assumptions, and thus can be perceived as a manifestation of the broader culture (Schein, 2010). The environment of an organization is comprised of systems and leadership approaches that can be changed over time, but not with the ease of adjusting climate.

In addition, the microcultures within an organization were studied when appropriate. An organization can include both subcultures, which reflect occupational

groups, along with microcultures, smaller teams or units that include people from various occupations (Schein, 2010). Subcultures develop based on shared experiences, histories, and tasks, with perceived correct approaches becoming the standards taught to new members (Schein, 2010). Schein (2010) explained, “Microcultures are the most variable and the most dynamic and, therefore, provide special opportunities to study culture formation and evolution” (p. 3). Varied cultures are developed within higher education institutions based on the shared experiences at universities or at the department level (Schein, 2010).

The criteria for evaluating environmental characteristics and microcultures were based on the factors necessary for adaptive change. For an organization to implement successful adaptive changes on an ongoing basis, the following qualities must be present: public discussion of challenging topics, shared responsibility for the organization’s future, valuing independent judgment, building leadership capacity, and institutionalizing reflection and continuous learning (Heifetz et al., 2009). First, an adaptive organization creates an environment in which sensitive issues can be discussed in public settings, even if it means addressing projects that senior leaders care about deeply. Second, adaptive organizations develop a sense of shared responsibility for the future of the organization for people, along with particular roles and functions that comprise a work role. Third, organizations promote a climate in which people are valued for independent judgment at all levels and encouraged to make decisions that are best for the organization. Fourth, adaptive organizations develop the leadership potential in people throughout an organization because the capacity for change is linked to individuals who are committed to a long-term future. Developing leadership potential requires clear guidance for all

employees along with an understanding of how individuals can maximize their contribution to an organization. Finally, adaptive organizations develop cultural norms that consistently communicate an openness and commitment to learning by encouraging experimentation and demonstrating a willingness to accept new perspectives that may conflict with previously successful approaches.

As previously mentioned, the adaptive change model has been studied and implemented in various fields, including business, health care, early childhood education, and religion (Heifetz et al., 2009). However, higher education environments vary significantly from those previously studied. The current literature on environments contributing to successful adaptive change is lacking. Thus, this study contributes new insights for college and university administrators and faculty attempting to create changes in response to the current pressures confronting the higher education system.

Conclusion

This literature review provided an overview of the issues pressuring colleges and universities to adapt, change models in higher education, and the adaptive change model and environmental characteristics that promote change. The purpose of this research was to study the environmental characteristics of exemplar institutions that have consistently created and implemented adaptive solutions to significant challenges. The research question guiding the study was: *What are the environmental characteristics within a higher education institution that consistently produce adaptive change?*

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a comparative case analysis design for its research methodology to explore the environmental characteristics that contribute to consistent and successful adaptive change at two higher education institutions. This chapter further explains the case study method along with the design implemented for my research. In addition, the following sections provide an overview of the purpose of the study, the researcher, participants, data collection, data analysis, ethical consideration, and verification of quality and trustworthiness.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to examine the environmental characteristics at exemplar institutions of higher education that have consistently created and implemented adaptive solutions to significant challenges. Understanding the environment of an institution in which adaptive change occurs on an ongoing basis provided a complex research topic worthy of exploration, as described by Creswell (2013). Experiencing a cultural context provides the best approach for studying issues related to organizational culture (Schein, 2010). Because the purpose and goals of a research study must align with the selected method, I selected a qualitative approach as the appropriate research method, as suggested by Maxwell (2013). I specifically selected a comparative case study analysis method. The primary research question guiding this

study was: *What are the environmental characteristics within a higher education institution that consistently produce adaptive change?*

Research Design

Qualitative research focuses on people, situations, and events, as well as the processes that provide a connection (Maxwell, 2013). The findings in a qualitative study express the analysis of how particular situations and events influence others (Maxwell, 2013). Qualitative research approaches include narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic, and case study (Creswell, 2013). Each qualitative method provides a unique opportunity for gaining knowledge, and it is the researcher's responsibility to identify the approach with the greatest congruence among the research question, data, and analysis (Richards & Morse, 2006).

The research design for this study utilized a comparative case study analysis due to the focus on the environment at two institutions and the desire to incorporate contextual considerations into the research (Yin, 2014). The case study approach focuses on a bounded scenario or context and allows understanding a particular culture, situation, or process (Creswell, 2013; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Richards & Morse, 2006). Setting boundaries for a case study creates an opportunity to focus on an environment or context (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

Implementing a case study is the preferable option for research questions focused on how or why a current phenomenon is occurring (Yin, 2014). Creswell (2013) explained that the case study methodology allows exploration of bounded systems “through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports)” (p. 97).

The study of higher education institutions provides a unique opportunity for researching a bounded system due to the multiple types of activities represented by faculty, administrators, and staff and their interactions with students and other constituencies. Additionally, case study methodology offers the potential for depth of findings through details, completeness, and variance (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Case study research has been applied in many disciplines, including education, psychology, medicine, law, and political science (Creswell, 2013).

A comparative case-study analysis was implemented for this study, following a critical case rationale due to the nature of the environments under analysis as described by Yin (2014). Additionally, Yin (2014) explained that a multiple-case study design strengthens the findings due to potential replication. The data from a study can confirm findings or designate differences between the comparison institutions. Thus, conclusions from a multiple-case study are more powerful than a single case study (Yin, 2014). Throughout the research, I focused on identifying environmental characteristics at the two sites that aligned or conflicted with each other, along with relevant literature, as recommended by Yin (2014).

The Researcher

This project built open and expanded my previous professional and personal experiences working in higher education institutions. I began working in higher education because of my own positive experiences as an undergraduate student; during my career, I developed a deep belief in the power of a college or university experience to shape an individual's life and impact communities and societies. My professional and academic experiences have also given me causes for concern about the long-term

viability of some institutions within the higher education sector, however. The institution where I am currently employed has attempted to respond to market forces like many other colleges and universities through budget cuttings, attempting to control discount rates, and working to increase revenue by launching online programs. Although these are important steps for creating a stable future for higher education, they do not reflect adaptive solutions.

In addition to my professional experience, my involvement with a doctoral research team for 2 years that focused on innovation and change in higher education has helped form my perspectives. This group researched projects related to individual and institutional efforts to pursue creative and innovative approaches at colleges and universities. Although adaptive solutions are difficult to identify within the sector, I remained intrigued by the potential of studying new approaches targeted at meeting shifting demands.

My personal experiences in the higher education field have primarily occurred in faith-based settings. I attended a small, faith-based university while studying for my bachelor's degree. Subsequently, I earned graduate degrees from and worked at similar institutions. Individuals attending such institutions gain access to tremendous strengths, such as community experience. However, the size, availability of resources, and cultural factors may also make substantial change more difficult.

In my experience working in higher education and researching the field, I have observed that many colleges and universities are familiar and comfortable with the process of implementing minor and technical changes rather than developing significantly disruptive solutions to current and future challenges. I believe colleges and

universities need new approaches to successfully respond to the various challenges that currently confront the higher education landscape, including financial models and demographic changes. I have specific concerns about small, faith-based colleges and universities because they are more susceptible to some of the pressures on the higher education system. I have perceived a specific need to develop adaptive strategies to address challenges at the faith-based institutions with which I am most familiar.

Participants

Site Selection

The site selection for this study identified the units of analysis, including defining and bounding the cases, as suggested by Yin (2014). The approach implemented was purposeful selection in which “particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to your questions and goals, and that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 97). The definition of the case was driven by the research question, which focuses on higher education institutions, an approach recommended by Yin (2014). Bounding the case required establishing parameters, including time and people involved (Yin, 2014). These steps are essential for defining the scope of data collection and differentiating between the phenomenon of the case and external context (Yin, 2014).

The sites for this study were identified through an iterative process, including previous research and recommendations from committee members. My prior experience participating in research related to change in the higher education setting suggested it can be challenging to identify sites where transformation has occurred. In my experience, popular media tends to highlight ventures that are new or outside of the higher education

system. In addition, recommendations from faculty or administrators often identify institutions that have been able to implement significant technical changes without challenging deeply held beliefs or assumptions, as characterized by the adaptive change needed to respond to external pressures.

Because the goals of my research centered on successful adaptive change within higher education settings, I solicited input from my committee members who have developed and maintained significant networks in the higher education field. Our inquiry centered on identifying institutions that demonstrated the following common characteristics of the adaptive change model: challenges routines, requires new learning, includes broad involvement from people within the organization, and resolves difficult problems (Heifetz et al., 2009).

The criteria ultimately established for site selection included several factors. First, at least two adaptive change initiatives must have been successfully implemented within the past 3 years. Adaptive change initiatives must demonstrate significant alterations in response to new dynamics. For higher education, the factors currently providing pressure for change include increasing costs, changing demographics, student success and outcomes, and increased scrutiny and accountability. Second, the process of change initiated a noticeable sense of loss among institutional personnel due to challenging strongly held beliefs or values people hold within the organization. Third, administrators, faculty, and staff demonstrated a development of new knowledge from working on a problem. The final requirement was for the change initiatives to necessitate the involvement of personnel from various departments throughout the institution. Due to

the bounded nature of case study methodology, a maximum enrollment of 5,000 students was established for potential institutions.

An initial pool of six sites was identified as potentially fulfilling each of the criteria. Recommendations from committee members were evaluated based on the degree to which each college or university met the criterion. We identified two institutions that had been recognized by multiple sources for implementing adaptive changes in response to current and significant challenges.

Demographics

The two universities selected for this study both have long histories of providing a quality higher education experience, primarily in a traditional and residential setting. In recent years, each institution has been able to successfully respond to current challenges by implementing adaptive change. For this research, I focused on successful adaptive change at higher education institutions to identify environmental characteristics that may be applicable in other settings. The two institutions selected for this study have recently been confronted with common challenges for the current higher education landscape, including financial pressures and changing demographics. Each institution is a private and faith-based university with an emphasis on the liberal arts along with professional programs that have been added in recent decades.

Case One. Program College (pseudonym) is located the central United States with an enrollment of nearly 2,000 students. Program College offers a variety of programs, including traditional undergraduate, adult evening undergraduate, and graduate, with formats including face-to-face and online. The institution was founded in 1937 and offers associate, bachelor, and master's degrees. Program College was selected

for this comparative case study due to successful adaptive changes resulting in creative deliveries of undergraduate and graduate programs.

Case Two. Technology University (pseudonym) is situated in the southern United States and serves over 5,000 students. Technology University offers traditional undergraduate and graduate programs, primarily through face-to-face delivery. The institution was founded in 1869 and awards bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Technology University was selected for this comparative case study because of successful adaptive changes related to technology, teaching and learning, and expanding student populations.

Data Collection

Data Source

Including multiple sources of evidence is an essential element in case study research because of the potential for identifying accurate and convincing data (Yin, 2014). Including a variety of sources and perspectives enhances the breadth of findings within a case study (Creswell, 2013). Yin (2014) described six data sources that can be incorporated in case study research: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts. Various sources of data were included in this study, including individual and group interviews, site observations, and analysis of artifacts (Creswell, 2013; Richards & Morse, 2006; Yin, 2014).

The primary data for this study were collected during a 1-week site visit to each campus, which provided the opportunity for immersion within the setting. I conducted extensive interviews and observations during each site visit. Data collected from interviews allowed for understanding the lived experiences of individuals and how they

had constructed meaning from those experiences, as suggested by Seidman (2006). Establishing the criterion for participants began with identifying personnel who had been significantly involved in the adaptive change occurring at the campuses. Participants needed intimate knowledge of the institution, as well as the past and current environments. In addition, various perspectives from people throughout the university were required. The interview participants included administrators, faculty, and staff, with each person intentionally selected to ensure a full range of institutional perspectives were included. Participant characteristics, such as role, gender, ethnicity, department, and time at the university, were also considered to ensure a variety of perspectives were captured.

These parameters led to recruiting a specified list of interview participants at each institution. Participants at each institution included the president, vice presidents, academic deans, and representative faculty and staff. I conducted the interviews in settings selected by the participants to ensure confidentiality. I also conducted follow-up dialogues by email or phone to clarify questions, collect additional information, and ensure the accuracy of initial findings. I analyzed documents and archives prior to and following the site visits. This review of content was designed to develop an understanding of the institutions and included institutional websites, mission statements, accreditation records, and marketing materials. In addition, this material either confirmed or conflicted with the data collected from interviews and observations.

Procedures

I made the initial request for conducting this study by contacting the president of each institution. After securing initial approval to conduct the research, the Institutional Review Board process was successfully completed at each institution. The president

designated a gatekeeper who provided assistance in communicating with potential participants. Each gatekeeper sent a brief description of the study, along with an invitation to participate, to eligible administrators, faculty, and staff based on the parameters previously described. All participants were asked at the beginning of meetings if interviews could be recorded and transcribed. In addition, participants received an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix A) that included information about the topic of the study and the option available to decline participation or respond to individual questions.

The interview protocol was designed primarily with open-ended questions to allow individuals to explain their experiences and construct meaning, as suggested by Seidman (2006). Questions focused on specific events and actions were incorporated to ensure the collection of useful data, in accordance with the guidelines given by Maxwell (2013). The categories of questions for the interviews examined the participant's personal history at the institution, experiences with adaptive change, and institutional environment; the interview protocols in their entirety are included as Appendix B. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each participant had the opportunity to review and confirm the transcript's reliability to ensure the accuracy of the data.

Several steps were taken to ensure the confidentiality of each participant in this study. All participant and location identifiers were removed from physical and electronic records. A pseudonym was assigned to each participant to allow his or her identity to remain unidentified. All electronic documents and audio recordings were retained on a password protected personal computer and secured in a locked home office. All files relating to this research will be destroyed 2 years after 2 completion of the study.

Data Analysis

Yin (2014) argued that a high-quality analysis in case study methodology includes all evidence from the research, addresses rival interpretations, incorporates the most significant aspects of the study, and includes the researcher's own expert knowledge. In attempting to achieve these standards, I applied several techniques, including explanation building and cross-case synthesis. Developing explanations includes writing narratives to describe the researched phenomenon and potentially theoretically significant propositions. Explanation-building is an iterative process that includes numerous steps of defining an initial theoretical statement and revising based on review of collected data and comparison to the other case. Cross-case synthesis allows development of robust findings because of the breadth of data collected. This technique focuses on aggregating findings through the research process. I applied these methods to achieve a thorough understanding of the data from each site individually and in comparison to each other.

Following my visit to each site, I coded, categorized, and analyzed all data to determine emerging themes. Throughout the data collection process, I recorded memos to assist with attaining a critical understanding of the research conducted, as suggested by Maxwell (2013). I systematically organized these memos by topic for access and review during the analysis process. In addition, I recorded meticulous field notes during site visits with the intent of retaining as much data as possible. I used NVIVO 10 as an additional resource for the coding and analysis process. This software system supports researchers in collecting, organizing, and analyzing unstructured data. By implementing these strategies, I was careful to incorporate all data from the research.

Data analysis followed a procedure that began with utilizing NVIVO 10 to categorize related words and phrases into unit groupings. Next, I identified clusters of meanings that could be developed into themes and wrote initial descriptions to capture the essential meaning of the data. I then noted significant statements that explained how participants described the characteristics of their work environment, particularly those that promoted adaptive change, as suggested by Creswell (2013). Each case was analyzed separately to understand the environmental characteristics contributing to adaptive change, before cross-case synthesis was applied. Additionally, analysis was correlated with theoretical propositions offered by Yin (2014) and incorporated within the literature review. Ultimately, the strongest themes identified in the analysis were included in the discussion sections.

Ethical Considerations

Because of the potential for discovering sensitive information during a qualitative study, I developed and implemented protocols to protect the confidentiality of all participants. Along with receiving institutional approval, each participant signed an Informed Consent Form, which stated the purpose of the study and allowed the audio recording of each interview. Participants also were informed of their rights throughout the study, including being given the option of refusing to respond to particular questions. Distinct steps were taken to protect the confidentiality of participants, regardless of the data source including interviews, site observations, follow-up dialogue, and email. I assigned each institution and participant a pseudonym for internal records and published materials to protect identities because of the potential for disclosing information related to professional experiences that an individual may prefer to remain anonymous.

Verification of Quality and Trustworthiness

In conducting this study, my goal was to incorporate internal controls to achieve quality and trustworthy findings. Ensuring reliability and validity throughout the research process demonstrates a level of rigor and contributes to the utility of the findings (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). According to Morse et al. (2002), “verification refers to the mechanisms used during the process of research to incrementally contribute to ensuring reliability and validity and, thus, the rigor of a study” (p. 9). Strategies to ensure trustworthiness must be incorporated and applied from the beginning stages of the research process and included at every step of the study (Morse et al., 2002). Additionally, the approaches taken for verification need to be incorporated into each part of the research process to identify any errors before negatively impacting analysis (Morse et al., 2002). Creating these verification measures thus provides a self-correcting process for identifying and correcting errors.

I engaged in several specific activities designed to contribute to verification throughout the research process. These activities included investigator responsiveness, methodological coherence, appropriate sampling, a concurrent approach to collecting and analyzing data, thinking theoretically, and theory development (Morse et al., 2002). First, the responsibility for ensuring quality and trustworthy research resides solely with the investigator (Morse et al., 2002). Because qualitative research is an iterative process, my goals were to remain open-minded throughout the study, apply my sensitivity, creativity, and insight to the research, and be willing to discard any ideas the data do not support regardless of initial excitement or potential (Morse et al., 2002, p. 10). Second, the research question, method, and data collecting procedures were thoroughly evaluated

for congruence and adjusted as needed. Third, in selecting participants for this study, I focused on participants who could best represent the characteristics of the institutional environment. Fourth, the iterative process of collecting and analyzing data occurred through continual interactions “between what is known and what one needs to know” (Morse et al., 2002, p. 12). Fifth, thinking theoretically entailed acknowledging new ideas that were consistently generated and evaluated in comparison to previously collected data or new data. Finally, the focus on theory development ensured an ongoing alternation between “a micro perspective of the data and a macro conceptual/theoretical understanding” (Morse et al., 2002, p. 13). This approach ensures outcomes result from the research process and provides “a template for comparison and further development of the theory” (Morse et al., 2002, p. 13).

One of the strengths of case study research is the potential use of multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2014). According to Thurmond (2001), triangulation “is the combination of two or more data sources, investigators, methodological approaches, theoretical perspectives, or analytical methods within the same study” (p. 253). Incorporating varied approaches within a study allows for identifying evidence that collaborates or challenges previously collected data (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). In addition, triangulation ensures multiple aspects of a phenomenon are studied, resulting in complimentary and expanded data (Maxwell, 2013). Applying triangulation methods provides an additional approach for achieving validity in a study, along with mitigating individual biases and incorporating varied perspectives (Thurmond, 2001). Applying triangulation in this study strengthened the findings and conclusions, as recommended by Yin (2014).

For this study, I applied data sources, investigator, and theoretical triangulation methods as recommended by Thurmond (2001) and Yin (2014). First, multiple sources of data were accessed to ensure appropriate information was generated for analysis, as suggested by Thurmond (2001). For example, numerous interviews were conducted with faculty, staff, and administrators. In addition, various sources of data were utilized, including institutional records and publications, along with site observations. Applying triangulation results in multiple sources of evidence supporting findings, resulting in “construct validity” (Yin, 2014, p. 121). Second, investigator triangulation was employed through my dissertation chair (who also served as methodologist) actively participating in the analysis process. Including multiple researchers helps “decrease the potential of bias in gathering, reporting, coding, or analyzing of the data and to contribute to internal validity” (Thurmond, 2001, p. 255). Third, I incorporated theoretical triangulation by evaluating my data in comparison with existing research throughout the study. This approach reduces alternative explanations and provides a broader perspective for evaluating findings (Thurmond, 2001). Thurmond described potential benefits of triangulations as “increasing confidence in research data, creating innovative ways of understanding a phenomenon, revealing unique findings, challenging or integrating theories, and providing a clearer understanding of the problem” (p. 254).

Conclusion

This study used a comparative case analysis to explore the environmental characteristics of Program College and Technology University that have consistently created and implemented adaptive solutions to significant challenges. This study was guided by the primary research question, *What are the environmental characteristics*

within a higher education institution that consistently produce adaptive change? This chapter explained details related to the purpose of this study, research design, data collection, data analysis, ethical consideration, and verification of quality and trustworthiness.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Multiple challenges have converged to confront administrators and faculty at higher education institutions. College and university leaders are increasingly expected to address questions about tuition costs, student debt levels, demographic changes, learning outcomes, retention, and delivery models (Brewer & Tierney, 2012; Selingo, 2013). The current climate has generated a need for postsecondary institutions to demonstrate the ability to change in ways that address new expectations (Brewer & Tierney, 2012; Calderon & Mathies, 2013; Wagner & Kegan, 2006). This context demonstrates the importance of this study, which examined the environmental characteristics of two institutions that have implemented significant change on an ongoing basis. The criteria for site selection in this research, as described in Chapter 3, included the following standards: (a) two or more adaptive change initiatives successfully implemented within the past 3 years, (b) the change process resulted in a noticeable sense of loss among institutional personnel due to challenging strongly held beliefs or values people hold within the organization, (c) employees demonstrated new knowledge from working on a problem, and (d) change initiatives necessitated the involvement of personnel from various departments throughout the institution.

This research was situated within the context of needed change in higher education, compounded by difficulties with which many colleges and universities are

confronted when trying to accomplish significant change (Selingo, 2013; Wildavsky et al., 2012). The study was designed to identify environmental characteristics within institutions that allow adaptive change to occur on an ongoing basis. For the purposes of this research, the organizational environment was defined as the regular experience of people's perceptions and actions within the organizational context (Frishammar, 2006). In particular, the organizational environment relates to how strategies and policies are identified and implemented, along with the acquisition and distribution of resources (Frishammar, 2006). A qualitative study, specifically a comparative case study analysis, provided the appropriate methodology for this research. The case study approach to research bounds a scenario or context, which allows deep understanding of a particular culture, situation, or process (Creswell, 2013; Flyvberg, 2011; Richards & Morse, 2006). The decision to employ a comparative case analysis methodology was based on the focus on the environment at two institutions and the desire to incorporate contextual considerations into the research (Yin, 2014).

The criteria for selecting the two sites for this research were based on four factors commonly ascribed to adaptive change in the literature (Heifetz et al., 2009). The defining characteristics of the adaptive change model include a willingness to challenge routines, developing new learning, incorporating broad involvement from people within the organization, and resolving difficult problems. The first site, Program College, with over 2,300 students enrolled, offers associate, bachelor, and master's degrees. The institution was chosen due to adaptive changes that have led to dramatic differences in the educational experience for students, faculty, and staff. Twenty-three administrators, faculty, and staff from Program College were included in the participant pool. The

second site, Technology University, with over 5,000 students enrolled, offers undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs. The institution was selected based on its track record of making numerous adaptive changes over a sustained period of time. Twenty-one administrators, faculty, and staff from Technology University participated in interviews for this research. The research question guiding the study was: *What are the environmental characteristics within a higher education institution that consistently produce adaptive change?*

Program College

Background

The location of Program College in the midst of farm fields and small towns may not strike many people as a place where significant change in higher education is occurring. The most common sights on the trip to the campus are indications of industrial work, including several buildings that are crumbling and have been shuttered. Farms and homes with white picket fences also indicate a local economy that has historically been built on agriculture. Program College is located in a town with a population of approximately 5,000 people, with residents in the county nearing 80,000. The institution was originally founded as a seminary in the 1930s and added a 4-year liberal arts college 10 years later. During my visit to the campus, administrators, faculty, and staff all expressed pride in the quality of the academic programs offered by Program College, along with a goal of maintaining rigor into the future. Currently, students can choose from more than 65 areas of study at the undergraduate level. An overview of Program College's campus location, the reality preceding adaptive change, and recent presidential leadership are provided in the sections that follow.

Campus location. Despite initial indicators of a struggling region, Program College has developed a reputation as an innovative leader in the field of higher education. The campus covers more than 180 beautiful acres, with buildings representing a mixture of new construction and other well-maintained buildings. During my time on campus, several participants noted excitement about the recent construction projects and others in the planning stage related to a resurgence of the institution. Enrollment at Program College for the fall of 2015 was slightly more than 2,300 students, reflecting significant growth of nearly 50% during the past decade. The institution employs eight senior administrators, as well as approximately 50 full-time faculty members and 130 full-time staff.

The town in which the Program College campus is located was traditionally viewed as a tourist location for much of the 20th century. However, the region encountered an economic downturn during the 1980s that impacted the entire area, including the Program College location. Many surrounding towns continue to struggle economically, but since the 1990s, there has been considerable investment by developers and local government to enhance the town in which Program College is located in an attempt to renew the tourism industry; furthermore, the region has increasingly become a hub for research-niche businesses. These influences of location impacted the findings described in this case study due to the economic challenges impacting residents in the area. Additionally, the business development that has occurred in the town in which Program College is located differs from the surrounding region. Thus, the setting has also provided opportunities for administrators and faculty at Program College to develop corporate partnerships that may not have been available to other institutions. A previous

president at Program College described these distinctive benefits of the campus location when compared to the surrounding area. In his view, the organization has been able to identify connections with the local community that align with their business interests.

Reality preceding adaptive change. Like many small, faith-based institutions, Program College expanded its enrollment over several decades and developed its campus to reach a level of financial solvency for much of its history. However, as an institution with only a modest endowment, there have been occasional periods of financial challenges. One of these instances occurred during the timeframe of the national financial crisis that spread broadly in 2008. Even before the implications of the national crisis were experienced, Program College encountered a serious financial predicament due to an enrollment shortfall. The national financial crisis elevated the nature of the institution's challenges and combined to provide a key instigator for the adaptive change and innovation developed in following years. This case study focuses on the time period that began with the institutional fiscal crisis and includes the subsequent 8 years, when my research was conducted on the campus.

During the institution's crisis period, the president and provost worked together with executive and faculty leaders to develop a comprehensive change initiative that radically altered the core business of the undergraduate traditional program. The new model that executive leaders and faculty created, with concepts primarily generated by the provost, incorporated dramatic changes to the curriculum, student experience, academic calendar, time to degree completion, and cost. The president and provost cast the vision and provided direction for this initiative and cultivated an environment of participation for employees. Administrators, faculty, and staff worked together at a rapid

pace to realign multiple elements of the traditional program due to a desire to provide real cost savings for students and create a unique program that would allow the university to increase its marketability. One goal in this effort was to differentiate the institution from its competitors in the region, particularly other faith-based institutions. The extent of the transformation to the undergraduate program across these various areas fit the requirements for this study as an adaptive change. In the years following the implementation of this comprehensive change initiative, further creative steps have been taken in the development of initiatives related to delivery models, tuition expenses, and graduate programs.

Presidential leadership. At the time of the institution's crisis, Program College was led by Dr. Johnson (pseudonym), who was nearing the conclusion of a lengthy period of service as president. Dr. Johnson was highly respected within the community for his leadership, personal character, and care for the institution, faculty, staff, and students. Toward the end of Dr. Johnson's tenure and prior to the creation of the comprehensive change initiative, he hired a new provost, Dr. Smith (pseudonym), who was a key figure in catalyzing much of the change described in this case study. Dr. Smith's previous experiences in higher education, including working in enrollment and executive roles at multiple institutions, allowed him to bring numerous creative ideas to his roles. Toward the conclusion of the implementation of the comprehensive change initiative, Dr. Johnson announced his retirement, and at the same time, the board introduced Dr. Smith as the next president. During interviews for this research, participants described this transition as a relatively seamless process due to the trajectory

of the institution. Throughout the remainder of the Program College case study description, these key figures are referred to by their pseudonyms.

In this case study, the story of Program College's transition to become an innovative leader in higher education is segmented into three distinct time periods that are categorized as (a) motivating change, (b) implementing change, and (c) sustaining the environment for change. Each phase is described more fully in the sections that follow, particularly in relationship to the institution's environmental characteristics. During the research conducted for this study, several themes were consistent throughout these phases, while new themes also emerged within individual phases as the identity of the institution shifted over time. It was clear from the data that the following elements contributed to motivating change at Program College: desire to survive, recognizing a missed opportunity, executive leaders as change catalysts, creating an awareness of context, trust, communicating a need to change, and willingness to make difficult decisions. There was also resistance and detractors to the change.

Motivating Change

The Program College case study analysis focuses first on motivating change, which was instigated by a major crisis, and resulted in implementing the comprehensive change initiative. The institution encountered severe financial challenges leading up to and during the 2008 national fiscal crisis, particularly a dramatic shortfall in student enrollment during the preceding year. When describing the impetus for change that has occurred, Dr. Smith stated:

We had a financial crisis going on.... In some ways, a crisis helps change in tremendous ways. When the recession happened, we had brought in a freshman

and transfer new student class of about 353 or so, and then dropped to 290.

That's a big drop for a small school like [Program College].

The loss in revenue was substantial and necessitated significant budget reductions due to the small size of the institution and limited endowment.

The financial status of the college during this crisis was described as "fragile" by people within the institution. One administrator explained the realities of the situation:

The biggest driver for the change and innovation that's been occurring... is the economic crash. Like so many small private institutions, we're very, very, very enrollment and tuition driven, and therefore, even being down 50 students is significant. Like most small schools, we have lived on the edge for a long time.

Every student is very significant.

The institution reduced expenses in multiple areas, including adjustments to staffing and program offerings, to balance the budget. Approximately 30 positions were eliminated, a reduction of nearly 15% of the organization's workforce. During this year of crisis, in addition, employees did not receive a raise, nor were institutional contributions made to employees' retirement funds. Many participants described these budget cuts as drastic but necessary, along with a desire expressed by institutional leaders to improve financial conditions rapidly. Dr. Smith clarified, "We went a year without raises and retirement, only one." The ability to limit these impacts to 1 year was an important goal of the administration and reflected a sense of urgency and desire to act swiftly.

One participant described this institutional crisis as a "perfect storm" due to a confluence of factors, including the institution's decline in enrollment, the national

financial crisis, regional economic challenges, changing national expectations for higher education, and the arrival on campus of a change agent in Dr. Smith as provost. As one administrator explained, “We all felt the world would not continue the same as it was.” The leadership at the institution was determined to catalyze the events of this “perfect storm” into making significant changes to quickly improving the overall status and create a viable future. Additionally, despite the challenges encountered from this crisis, the data from this study demonstrated that faculty and staff at Program College also were committed to continue operating, and even more importantly, fulfill the institution’s mission.

Desire to survive. The financial crisis that was occurring nationally and regionally, along with the institution’s enrollment decline, created a scenario in which survival of the institution was coming into question. As administrators, faculty, and staff recognized the reality of the institution’s financial crisis, the level of fear began to increase as people began to question Program College’s current and future viability. This concern for survival was a key factor in generating momentum and support for a plan to revitalize the traditional undergraduate student experience. In just 2 years, a comprehensive change initiative was developed and implemented, resulting in reshaping many elements of the traditional undergraduate program across multiple departments. The quick action demonstrated by administrators, faculty, and staff appeared to be motivated by a concern for survival that was mentioned by all interview participants.

Fear related to financial trajectory. When discussing the impetus for this comprehensive change initiative, participants articulated their concern about the long-term survival of Program College due to the fiscal status resulting from the institutional

crisis. Administrators, faculty, and staff had a clear awareness that the financial trajectory of the institution was not stable and that changes would need to occur. One administrator explained, “When you realize we must do something... or we will not survive, that gets everybody’s attention.” One professor described her concern about the institution’s viability at the time:

We’re going to die. It was basically... take a big risk because if we don’t take a risk, we’re not going to be an institution anymore. In that sense, it wasn’t like, “Oh, we’re losing something that we could have.” It was change or die. It probably wasn’t that dire, but I would say we were pretty demoralized as a community, so kind of like the dog that’s gotten kicked around.

Other participants also identified the sense of fear that was prevalent among employees during this crisis period, which ultimately contributed to action.

The concern for survival infused administrators, faculty, and staff with a willingness to try new approaches. This change in attitude was particularly noteworthy because in previous years, a strategic plan had called for a review and overhaul of program offerings. Although this change process had been attempted, minimal progress had been made, and the general consensus was that the project had stalled due to lack of agreement in faculty committees. Dr. Smith explained that “change had started because the strategic plan called for it. [But] it wasn’t done adequately, and the president asked me to redo it. The recession hits and the crisis helped the urgency.” This example was presented by several participants as reflecting the reality that the institutional crisis prompted significant change that had previously been attempted but did not have adequate urgency.

The newly generated sense of urgency created a willingness to consider new alternatives, decision making, and experimentation. One cabinet-level executive described this general understanding as “Let’s get crazy and do it.” An academic administrator stated, “The wolf was at the door, and when the wolf is at the door, that creates an environment that is very open to change.” This recognition prompted collective agreement to try to do things differently in the pursuit of enrollment growth in the traditional undergraduate program as explained by another cabinet-level leader:

We needed to figure out a way to get more students. It was really just a bottom-line survival. We’re not going to be here in 5 years if we don’t do something different than what we’ve been doing, but still keeping within our mission. How can we have our mission, extend and enhance it, get more students, and financially make it?

These comments reflected an additional factor during the motivating change phase, in which the desire to survive was also characterized by a focus on mission.

Focus on mission. The desire for survival was deeply rooted in the employees’ belief that the educational experience provided to students at Program College was worth preserving. Several participants expressed a deep commitment to the institution’s capability to uniquely serve students. One professor stated:

Part of the survival element is that we really believe in our education and what we do. If we did not believe in it, the survival part would not have felt so dire. But we really feel like we have a great campus, a wonderful program, and there is still life in us that God can use us.... We do not want to be an institution that closes

our doors because we really believe in our product, if you want to call it a product.

This commitment to mission made the desire for survival even more important because people were willing to sacrifice and struggle for something in which they truly believed. In part, this commitment to institutional mission reflected a conviction that the college could best serve the student population in the region.

As institutional leaders sought strategies for addressing the crisis facing Program College during the motivating change phase, significant steps were taken during a one-day summit of approximately 35 key administrators, faculty, and staff. Dr. Johnson focused the day on a discussion about what Program College should look like if the institution was started in the current era and serving the regional population. Despite the crisis that was currently underway, conversation centered on missional components that were important to all participants, providing an opportunity to center future changes on the core values while dreaming about the future. The group agreed on foundational principles that aligned with the institution's history and mission and identified new areas of emphasis, including affordability. The following section describes another environmental characteristic, recognizing a missed opportunity, that was apparent during the motivating change phase.

Recognizing a missed opportunity. As previously described, motivating change was intricately linked to a broad desire to survive among employees. Additionally, the president and provost helped faculty and staff recognize that identifying and capitalizing on opportunities were essential for the institution. To communicate this message, executive leaders regularly communicated with employees about a significant missed

opportunity in the recent past that led people to understand the connection between survival and embracing new opportunities. Specifically, another institution within the region had implemented significant changes to delivery models approximately 20 years ago. At that time, Program College leaders and faculty evaluated the possibility of implementing similar changes, but determined such steps would not be necessary or helpful. Some people questioned whether a different delivery model would align with the institution's mission. In recent decades, the comparable institution had experienced tremendous growth, and significantly strengthened its financial position.

During the motivating change phase at Program College, the example of this neighboring institution was regularly highlighted by administrators, with an emphasis on not allowing another opportunity to pass. Administrative leaders communicated the need to compete for students and be ahead of competitors in relation to the interests of prospective students. Ultimately, recognizing this previous missed opportunity prompted administrators, faculty, and staff to embrace a new approach as the comprehensive change initiative was developed for the traditional undergraduate student population. In the motivating change phase, executive leaders played a significant role as catalysts.

Executive leaders as change catalysts. Prior to the development of this significant change initiative, the traditional approach at Program College had been for faculty to provide leadership through a committee structure. Institutional leaders and faculty members recognized that relying on faculty leadership alone would not allow pursuing significant change at a timely pace when Program College was managing a fiscal crisis. Dr. Smith described the environment upon his arrival as one in which academic administrators had “overreacted to a sentence in our accreditation report about

faculty governance” and had relied too heavily on professors to provide leadership through a committee structure. Dr. Smith perceived that employees throughout the institution were tiring of “faculty running everything.... There was some discontent over not having stronger administration leadership.”

Several participants reported that the faculty also had recognized that a decentralized committee approach was not adequately providing guidance in terms of the future directions of Program College. One professor explained:

We had a lot of committees and... it felt a little piecemeal and not a lot of top down leadership.... This committee system tried to implement some change and they came up with the fact that we cannot. That was their final answer. We cannot. Our new provost said, “I understand that you all reviewed this and you cannot come up with any agreeable solutions.” He said, “That is not acceptable.” He’s been a strong leader who helped people overcome some pretty significant obstacles, who lends his support and resources to be strategic about change.

The institutional crisis prompted broad recognition that a transfer in the balance of power from faculty to administrative leadership was necessary to pursue significant change; one administrator explained that Dr. Johnson made strategic decisions to implement this transition. In fact, this administrator quoted Dr. Johnson as saying, “There’s nothing like a good crisis to give you opportunity for innovation and change.” With this transition to an administratively-driven institution, executive leaders gained increased capacity to catalyze change.

The importance of administrative leadership. Nearly all participants who were interviewed described the central role of Dr. Smith in catalyzing action in developing the

comprehensive change initiative. A significant step was taken by Dr. Johnson to designate the recently hired provost to guide the comprehensive change initiative. Having been granted substantial influence, Dr. Smith took quick action in response to the institutional crisis as he explained:

Our strategic plan had called for a complete program review. Before I came as provost, a faculty committee had looked at that and said... everything needs to get better resources before we make any changes. That was the end of the story. The president asked me to do it over. I started that immediately... when the recession hit, it was really timely, because I had a group of faculty and administrators work on that... I said to them, "It can't take forever. I want to have a report by the end of the first semester."

Throughout his time at Program College, Dr. Smith has continued this tactic of swift action on pressing matters, as illustrated by this example of setting a short deadline for completion of a project. The same practice was evident after Dr. Smith became president and the institution continued in the phases of implementing change and sustaining an environment for change.

Dr. Smith made efforts to explain how a governance model could work in which administrators provided decisive leadership while maintaining a faculty voice. He stated, "I talked a lot my first 2 or 3 years about what administration does and what faculty does, and I mean over and over and over and over." This consistent messaging from Dr. Smith helped to clarify the changing parameters regarding the shared governance roles of faculty and administrators at Program College. One result of shifting to an administratively-driven governance approach was that not all elements of the

comprehensive change initiative were presented to the faculty for a vote. Although all parts of the plan were discussed with the faculty, some key portions were described as administrative decisions, thus bypassing a vote. Although executive leaders increasingly operated as change catalysts during the motivating change phase, there was also recognition of the importance of faculty buy-in.

The importance of faculty buy-in. As the comprehensive change initiative was developed, Dr. Smith identified key faculty to support the comprehensive change initiative. He spoke of specific senior faculty as being “phenomenal” in their support of administrators during a time of significant change. Dr. Smith described a conversation with one faculty member about not having to “agree with everything” but also not “bad mouthing” the administrators to the students, because of the influence professors can have with students. Dr. Smith described this professor’s communication to faculty during one meeting:

He said, “You have to listen to what Dr. Smith’s saying. We’re not going to have what we had before.” Years before, the president had to make major changes... and it led to everybody just hating this [previous president]. The faculty were almost revolting.... This professor said, “We’re not going to go through that. The stuff was wrong.... We can’t be doing that. We won’t even be here.” Having a senior faculty member say that, I could’ve hugged him, kissed the guy. That really helps. He did have a spirit of innovation.

Several participants noted this ability of the administrative leadership to solicit and gain adequate support from the faculty to allow the comprehensive change initiative to proceed.

The urgency of the crisis situation required fast action, which resulted in a certain amount of releasing of power by faculty; this release was viewed by administrators, faculty, and staff as necessary, given the situation. One staff member recognized the comprehensive change initiative would not have succeeded without persistent and strong leadership from administrators. He stated:

The top-down approach had to occur to meet the timeline that we wanted as an institution. If we would have continued just to meet in our groups to flesh it out without the strong leadership to say, “We are going to do this so we need to be making progress on this. And we are starting this.” If we didn’t have that leadership, we wouldn’t have been ready, and who knows where we would have been today.

These comments reflected a common understanding that it was essential for the institution to change, and a shifting of power within the shared governance model was needed as part of that process. Additionally, a commitment to communication and action was consistently demonstrated by executive leaders.

Communication and action-orientation of executive leaders. Faculty and staff members who were interviewed credited both Dr. Johnson and Dr. Smith for communicating about the challenges confronting the institution and allowing dialogue about potential solutions during the motivating change phase. These executive leaders also devoted significant energy and action to move the institution toward significant change, including generating ideas and maintaining momentum. Each leader provided direction with a differing style, as one administrator explained:

Change happened because of the combination of Dr. Johnson's credibility and making it known that things have got to change. Then there was Dr. Smith's ability to think out of the box and make things happen. He is a very catalytic leader. It was a great combination for us. That's one of the reasons why, looking back after the fact, we have a culture of innovation now. It's been hard, but exciting as well, to get to be a part of that.

These comments reflected a general understanding that both executives contributed uniquely to the advancement of this change initiative.

First, Dr. Johnson communicated about the need for change to the organization as a whole and created an environment for involvement as another administrator explained:

I believe Dr. Johnson is a very adaptive leader; that's very much his leadership style. He really fleshed out a lot of those principles of not being the problem solver, not coming in and saying, "I'm going to rescue us from everything." But getting everybody engaged and involved, and seeing some solutions emerge from that, was quite brilliant.

Participants frequently credited Dr. Johnson's communication skills, as well as a high trust level for him throughout the institution, as reasons for the high level of acceptance about the reality of the institution's current situation.

Second, Dr. Smith contributed creative ideas that had been culled from varied previous experience at several colleges and universities, including administrative roles and work in enrollment. Dr. Smith also expressed the urgency for implementing change that would allow the institution to attract higher numbers of students. One professor explained, "We had somebody who knew we needed to do something innovative,

different, and unique in order to put ourselves out there and a notch above others. And I think that's what he did." These remarks encapsulate a perception that Dr. Smith energized the change initiative and catalyzed activity quickly. Additionally, as executive leaders catalyzed change, they promoted collaboration with faculty during the motivating change phase.

Collaboration between administrators and faculty. As administrative leaders provided substantial and consistent leadership, they also cultivated an environment of collaboration. One primary example identified by several participants was Dr. Smith's creation of multiple teams of administrators, faculty, and staff members to working on assigned parts of the comprehensive change initiative. This approach ensured involvement throughout the institution as nearly all administrators and faculty were assigned to at least one team.

Additionally, throughout the process of developing and implementing the comprehensive change initiative, regular planning and discussion meetings were conducted with faculty and staff. At peak stages of the development process, frequent planning meetings were scheduled. Dr. Smith explained, "We had meeting after meeting and, there was a special, one whole week of every afternoon with faculty. We just kept working it through, with both formal faculty meetings and extra times too." From the faculty perspective, one individual explained the collaboration involved in the change process, "We all worked on it.... It took up some of our whole faculty meetings. It was all positive, but we talked our way through and what it would take." Participants described these meetings as a setting where open communication could occur, and people worked through ideas or concerns.

The relatively small size of the institution apparently factored into allowing this level of collaboration to occur. Leaders were intentional about working together, and the setting provided the potential for a cohesive context. Dr. Smith stated, “We talked a lot. We’re small enough. We have combined faculty meetings.” One professor also explained:

There was a lot of discussion about every little aspect, things that come up as part of it. That’s helpful, given the size of the school and the lack of bureaucracy....

There’s no closed doors. When there are issues, you just talk to people about them.

These collaborative efforts were enhanced by intentional efforts by administrators to create an awareness about the context in which the institution was operating.

Creating an awareness of context. As the comprehensive change initiative was discussed and developed, administrators placed significant emphasis on studying and understanding the national and regional market forces impacting higher education, thus creating an awareness of context for faculty and staff. As administrative leaders evaluated the current realities along with future forecasts, they communicated that information to faculty and staff, leading to increased knowledge about current and anticipated pressures. This section describes the work of administrators in developing understanding about the institution’s context, tactics for communication with employees, and the resulting impacts on actions.

Work of administrators. The first step in creating an awareness of the context impacting Program College was to develop understanding among cabinet-level administrators. Dr. Johnson explained his key role by initiating dialogue with

administrators even in advance of the national fiscal crisis. Dr. Johnson and other administrators had recognized substantial issues that were beginning to confront higher education as a whole, with the belief these factors would force change. All cabinet-level administrators had read about the finances of small colleges and began to question the viability of Program College's budget model along with other institutions in the region. Ultimately, the group concluded that incremental adjustments would be inadequate in this climate; rather, radical change would be required.

This work in identifying current challenges and forecasting anticipated issues, particularly related to affordability for families and the business model for higher education, proved beneficial to administrators when the institution encountered its financial crisis. Dr. Johnson stated, "We began the year before that [enrollment shortfall] not knowing it was coming.... We began thinking about the realities of cost, especially in higher education, and we all felt the world would not continue the same." The leaders interviewed expressed gratitude that they had already been researching issues and thinking about potential ideas and solutions. The next step in creating an awareness of context during the motivating change phase was implementing tactics for communication with faculty and staff.

Tactics for communication. As cabinet-level leaders worked to increase their understanding of market forces confronting Program College, they made a commitment to inform employees about these issues through various channels. One formal piece of that communication process was the early creation of a task force of cabinet-level administrators and professors that produced a report about national and regional economic trends, family income levels, higher education business models, and resulting

recommendations for the institution. This report provided a common background of issues for employees when discussing potential changes at Program College.

An additional strategy was consistent messaging from Dr. Johnson at monthly employee meetings. As the national fiscal crisis spread in 2008, the institution encountered increasing challenges, given the economic challenges were particularly painful for families and businesses in the region. Dr. Johnson explained how this reality informed his communication to faculty and staff:

I got up in every employee meeting and gave reports on what the economy was like. I started from the local county, and worked to counties from which we drew students. I talked about unemployment rates, household income, and the national issues, and just kept saying these things are not going away. We can bury our head in the sand. We can claim this isn't fair. Whatever it is we say, it won't change that picture.

Although some employees found such communication to be depressing, there was a general appreciation for the honesty and awareness that the approach created a clear understanding of the institution's status. The data from this study reflected a clear commitment by people within the institution to respond to the current realities. There was no denial about the challenges confronting Program College, even if it required frequent and difficult conversations.

As the awareness about the regional context among faculty and staff was developed, a fear began to permeate faculty and staff that some of the universities in the region would not survive. One administrator stated, "We knew there were some schools that were not going to make it, and we did not want to be one of them." One concern that

was repeatedly mentioned as motivating action was the difficulty of potential students to pay for college expenses, which would directly impact Program College's budget model as well as other local institutions. An administrator described this concern, "Looking ahead at declining demographics, students going closer to home, and the willingness of families to pay for what is a perceived value or a real value, we knew we needed to do something." These comments illustrated that as the awareness of contact was increased among faculty and staff, there was also an ability to connect current market pressures and forecasting to the need to implement change during this motivating change phase.

Resulting impacts on action. The increasing understanding about the challenges caused by Program College's location within a region confronted with a fiscal crisis and saturated with other institutions resulted in seeking to identify changes that would differentiate Program College. An administrator explained:

We had discussions about how we're in a belt of colleges. They're all within a stone's throw from us. We don't have an endowment that guarantees other schools. One school's got all the flashy buildings. Another school has the history and the heritage. I think they appeal to a different crowd. We said, "So what's our niche?" Friendly, blue collar.... I'm not trying to say that blue collar's not good. I'm just saying other schools draw a different student.... Most of our kids are blue collar. Our socioeconomic status is about \$50,000 per family, so they're not going to easily go to more expensive schools. We thought we had that. So what do we do? We wanted to advertise savings.

Faculty and staff articulated their growing understanding that the institution needed to design programs that would meet the needs of the regional population base. Participants

explained their recognition that affordability must become the distinctive of Program College as students and families within the region evaluated institutions. One staff member highlighted that people frequently asked what “our customers” wanted as part of the experience at Program College.

The resulting comprehensive change initiative extended beyond minor adjustments or duplicating successful approaches from other institutions. Participants explained the recognition that Program College needed to identify a substantially different model to obtain an “edge” during an era of “shifting” enrollments. One administrator explained, “We get tired of chasing other institutions, all these great schools. They’re terrific schools. We want to be out front. How do we get out front? Well, we’re going to have to be radical.” Participants frequently commented about the unique nature of Program College’s change initiative and how rarely people could find similar offerings at other institutions. The willingness to pursue these types of radical changes was enhanced by an adequate level of trust between cabinet-level administrators, faculty, and staff that was apparent during the motivating change phase.

Trust. In addition to previous environmental characteristics of desire to survive, recognizing a missed opportunity, executive leaders as change catalysts, and creating an awareness of context during the motivating change phase, trust between cabinet-level administrators and faculty was identified as a key factor in the development and implementation of the comprehensive change initiative. Institutional leaders recognized the importance of building and maintaining trust with faculty and staff throughout the change initiative. In addition, faculty and staff expressed confidence that administrators maintained the institution’s best interests as a central goal. This level of trust contributed

to an acceptance of the institution's financial situation and a willingness to participate in change initiatives.

It should be noted that some administrators also described that the trust level varied during this phase, given that some people did not fully believe in all elements of the comprehensive change initiative. One administrator described this as seeking to achieve "a persisting level of sufficient trust to take the next step." Although some employees did not support the comprehensive change initiative, having sufficient trust at key decision points allowed the institution to continue moving forward. It was clear in the data that Program College administrators developed trust through mutual respect, credibility, and valuing people.

Mutual respect. In describing the importance of trust during the motivating change phase, participants identified a level of mutual respect that is present among administrators, faculty, and staff. One example of this commitment to mutual respect was an important decision made by Dr. Smith to communicate more openly with faculty and staff about institutional results and data. He explained the role of communicating fully as key to building trust:

We had been pretty protective with data. I took the other way and I've continued that as president. I put things out there for people. It shows you respect them... and leads to a decent level of trust. Trust is really, really important for making change.

Dr. Smith and other administrators also expressed a high level of respect for the contributions of faculty at the institution. Several administrators spoke of their

appreciation for professors as individuals and the essential work they do in teaching and engaging with students.

Participants identified the faith-based nature of the institution as contributing to an environment of mutual respect between administrators, faculty, and staff. One administrator explained, “For a Christian institution... what sets us apart isn’t our educational philosophy or theology, it’s how we treat one another. Mutual respect and trust is a key aspect of love.” These comments captured the idea among participants at Program College that people felt a high level of trust for others due to a foundational mutual respect.

Credibility. One reason trust was present during the motivating change phase as the institution experienced a fiscal crisis was the appreciation employees had for the credibility of institutional leaders. Staff and faculty accepted the reports that Dr. Johnson presented at employee meetings due to their confidence in his character. One administrator explained that this trust level contributed to considering new approaches for the institution:

We respect Dr. Johnson greatly, and so he was able to negotiate those waters of being very honest with us about the condition.... There was a combination of... the external crisis of the economy, a great threat, and a leader who did two things. He used his years of credibility; he is a man you can trust to the hilt with total integrity. Also, it was an opportunity for us to say we really need to rethink who we are and we were on board for that.

In addition to the respect faculty and staff maintained for Dr. Johnson, employees viewed Dr. Smith as highly credible due to the experiences gained at multiple institutions

throughout his career. In contrast, most other institutional leaders had devoted significant time to Program College with few roles at other colleges or universities. One administrator explained the confidence that Dr. Smith's credibility instilled in employees:

When Dr. Smith came, it gave us a license to let go of the rope and say, "We can slalom. We can do this thing on one ski. We can do something radical and still stand." There was almost a hesitancy before.

Dr. Smith also demonstrated a high capacity for consuming and disseminating knowledge about higher education as well as regional and national issues impacting the field. In addition to an environment in which mutual respect was demonstrated and faculty and staff viewed senior-level leaders as credible, trust was enhanced through a commitment to valuing people.

Valuing people. During the motivating change phase at Program College, board members and cabinet-level administrators made intentional decisions to demonstrate appreciation to employees for the heavy workload required for the comprehensive change initiative. For example, additional work was required from professors to make significant curriculum changes, so faculty received extra compensation in the form of salary stipends. Additionally, in recognizing that current salary levels did not align with comparable institutions, the board and cabinet-level administrators expressed a commitment to improve faculty compensation levels in subsequent years after the change initiative. Leaders at the institution also noted that some of the cuts experienced by employees related to increases in salaries and retirement contributions only occurred during 1 year. These examples indicated the administration's appreciation for the faculty and staff at Program College, which, in turn, enhanced their commitment to and support

of change initiatives. The ability to build trust as an environmental characteristic during the motivating change phase was essential due to difficult decisions made by cabinet-level administrators during the same timeframe.

Difficult decisions. During the institutional crisis at Program College, cabinet-level administrators were forced to make difficult decisions that included restructuring budgets, eliminating programs, and discontinuing the employment of some faculty and staff while working on the comprehensive change initiative. The general sense among participants was that many of these choices were necessary to move the institution forward, despite the challenge that such hard decisions represented for everyone involved. For example, one cabinet-level administrator described the issues related to laying off employees:

When the economy hit, a lot of things came to the surface, and our enrollment was down.... We had to make some very, very difficult decisions, and we cut over 30 positions, which for us that's... 12 to 15% of our employees. What that does is kind of send shock waves through an organization. Especially Christian organizations, where you'll do just about anything as opposed to letting go of people, especially long time and wonderful people; it's just painful. It's painful anywhere to do that, but in Christian organizations, even more so.

During this phase of motivating change, Program College administrators began to cultivate an environment in which decisions were based on relevant data, and there was an increased speed in decision making.

Developing a reliance on data. Some participants who were interviewed perceived that many initial and significant decisions at Program College were based on

“gut feelings” or indirect evidence. Several of those choices, particularly related to the comprehensive change initiative, have yielded positive results. However, institutional leaders, and particularly Dr. Smith, wanted to develop a more comprehensive and data-driven approach to decision making and performance accountability. The first steps toward cultivating that environment were taken in response to the institutional crisis when a group of administrators and faculty was assigned the task of evaluating all academic programs. This process ultimately prompted administrators to eliminate a handful of programs based on current contributions to Program College and projections for the future. Although many people within the institution (particularly faculty and students) experienced angst about these decisions, understanding was gained by basing the decision on evaluative data and including people from various parts of the institution.

Another demonstration of developing a reliance on data was the process for creating the comprehensive change initiative. One administrator explained:

I was part of a group that sat down and, led by Dr. Smith, re-engineered the school. We looked at every piece of Program College. I mean everything. It was almost like you opened a new college in the living room of your house. The question was, what do we need to do? Every class, syllabus, policy [was reviewed].

These comments demonstrated a perception that during the motivating change phase, administrators and faculty were increasingly participating in process to collect data and evaluate any part of the institution, resulting in some difficult decisions that were necessary for positive changes.

Speed of decision making. When cabinet-level administrators reached decisions about budget adjustments, program cuts, or personnel transitions, the results were implemented quickly. Moving forward rapidly as decisions were made reflected the seriousness of Program College's crisis and need to change to achieve a healthier financial status. One administrator stated, "I think that what helped was the deepness of what we were doing and the relative swiftness by which it happened, so that in some respects we got ahead of the game." The speed with which decisions were made aligned with Dr. Smith's style; he consistently established rapid timelines for the completion of projects. The difficult decisions made by cabinet-level administrators were accepted by many faculty and staff, but there were also resistance and detractors evident during the motivating change phase.

Resistance and detractors. During interviews, many participants explained that the campaign to transform the traditional student experience with the comprehensive change initiative was invigorating but also challenging. Some people found the work to be too difficult, others disagreed with the new methods or direction of the institution, and a few questioned whether there was a change in Program College's mission. One staff member discussed the challenges encountered during the motivating change phase, including witnessing people who had committed to participate in the comprehensive change initiative but did not follow through with their support:

There were times when some people jumped ship and thought, "Maybe we are going in the wrong direction." There were a lot of hard conversations... people who said, "I'm on board with this," and didn't back that up over the following months. That was hard and frustrating because it's like, what changed? What

was the dynamic that changed from when you gave your word and then somewhere along the line retreated from that?

Despite occasional painful situations such as these, strong buy-in from the majority of the Program College constituencies continued moving forward with the initiative.

As the development of the comprehensive change initiative continued, some individuals chose to seek employment elsewhere due to disagreements about the direction of the institution or an inability to meet expectations resulting from new ways of operating; others decided to wait and see how the initiative worked out. One professor described the situation:

There are people who said, “I don’t want to go through all this.” There were some people who realized they were going to have to change and they had been teaching the same way for 20 or 30 years, and didn’t really want to get on board with the new system. There were some changes with people who weren’t on board because it was such a strong leadership directive that you couldn’t stay and just complain about it. You either had to get on board or get off the ship.

The general understanding communicated by participants was that the direction of the institution had been established and communicated, so faculty and staff had to make decisions whether to participate or transition out. One professor described that with increased administrative leadership, and particularly the guidance by Dr. Smith, there were increased expectations to support the comprehensive change initiative:

Now, if [someone] has not agreed to [a change] then you don’t want to oppose him... It’s a good-bad sort of thing but when everything was dispersed, the power was dispersed. It was pretty hard to move anything forward.

As this participant noted, the expectation for involvement with the comprehensive change initiative resulted from previous inabilities by faculty to lead change efforts. Faculty and staff who continued working at Program College recognized their intentional decisions to support the new direction of the institution. One staff member explained:

From my perspective, the people who can accept change and grow stayed at Program College.... My sense is that the people who stayed with us... either enjoy change or put up with change well.

Analysis of the data from the interviews with administrators who were involved with leading the change initiative indicated their understanding of the difficulties people can experience during the change process. Several participants commented on the time and energy devoted to discussion and coaching for people who had questions or were resistant to the initiative. However, institutional leaders were committed to proceeding. The president described his approach when facing challenges or obstacles, "Mainly, it was just spending the time with people in acknowledging their issues and listening and trying to modify when or where we could. But still staying on, moving." Participants recognized that adjustments were made to the change initiative along the way, but the major decisions related to moving forward would not be altered.

The motivating change phase, which occurred in conjunction with an institutional crisis, included direct effects on the financial resources of the institution as specifically demonstrated through staff layoffs and program closures. Employees throughout the institution seemed to understand the realities of the situation and embraced the opportunity to make changes that would lead to institutional survival. It appeared that few employees responded to the status by denying reality. Because the emotional tenor

for some people within the institution initially reflected demoralization, steps were taken by administrative leaders to enhance morale when possible. Also, the fact that a plan was swiftly identified provided minimal opportunity for employees to become comfortable with a “new normal” of declining enrollment or resources. Ultimately, the crisis did not challenge the particular sense of mission at Program College; on the contrary, facing and navigating the crisis strengthened the institution’s commitment to the mission. The next section describes the implementing change phase, during which the comprehensive change was launched.

Implementing Change

The second phase described in this case study of Program College is the period during which the comprehensive change plan was implemented, specifically through rolling out the new model to current and prospective students, along with their families. The model that was implemented had been developed during the motivating change phase and resulted in dramatic new approaches to the traditional program’s curriculum, student experience, academic calendar, time to degree completion, and cost. The timeframe in which the institution encountered a crisis and then developed and implemented the radical new initiative was only 2 years. How the change came to be embedded at Program College involved the following environmental characteristics identified in the data: early success, encouraging feedback, and increasing accountability.

Early success. Many participants described the importance of the comprehensive change initiative quickly demonstrating success for the institution. The new approach was such a dramatic change that continuing to build support from faculty and staff was essential. Resources had been devoted to the development of the new model and, as

previously described in the motivating change section, some people within the community were taking a “wait and see” attitude. When the new model launched, the institution experienced an immediate increase in enrollment during the fall semester, a trend that continued in following years. This enrollment growth was perceived by participants as resulting from the uniqueness of the new model and validating the transformative new approach. The growth in enrollment allowed stabilization of the fiscal status of the institution. Additionally, the institution received positive responses from students and families about the attention the new model devoted to affordability.

Leading instead of following. Because Program College was implementing an entirely new approach for the traditional undergraduate program, as envisioned during the motivating change phase, administrators could not identify other institutions as examples. The lack of examples contributed to some uncertainty among employees about what the results would be when implemented. One professor recalled a conversation with the provost, “We asked him, ‘Where did you get this model from?’ He didn’t have a lot of examples. I’m not sure how the idea was initiated, but the model has worked.” During the process of developing and implementing the comprehensive change initiative, Program College demonstrated a willingness to lead with new approaches to higher education rather than solely follow approaches observed at other institutions. Experiencing early success following the launch of the new model was essential to confirming the benefits of this approach and provided encouragement for faculty and staff to consider further changes in following years. The initial success also enhanced the credibility of executive leaders.

Enhancing credibility. Many participants credited the early success to Dr. Smith's leadership, because he was viewed as the primary catalyst for the comprehensive change initiative. The early success experienced at Program College thus enhanced Dr. Smith's credibility even further among employees. One administrator described a general attitude as being characterized by: "This guy knows what he is doing. Let's follow him." This type of optimistic perspective was mentioned by many participants who greatly appreciated the work of Dr. Smith through Program College's change initiatives.

Several participants mentioned a concern that the institution could have experienced multiple challenges if the comprehensive change initiative had failed or not demonstrated earlier results. One administrator described the potential impact that failure at the roll-out phase would have had on the goal of creating an innovative environment:

If the initial change initiative would have failed, it would've been a huge blow to the innovative environment Dr. Smith desired to foster. Because that worked and some of his other innovations worked... that has bought him a lot of runway. He is willing to make the hard decisions... and they have worked. There are other ideas that haven't worked, but the ones early on did. Now people sort of understand, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, and we'll change and adapt.

As reflected by these comments, the early success of the comprehensive change initiative was a critical factor in gaining and maintaining the support of faculty and staff to continue with further initiatives. Although different initiatives implemented throughout Program College in subsequent years have not matched the success of the first plan or

established goals, people expressed an understanding that experimenting with new approaches might include some degree of failure and subsequent adaptation. An additional benefit of experiencing early success was contributing to greater openness to change.

Openness to change. As faculty, staff, and administrators participated in and observed successful implementation of the comprehensive change initiative, increasing signs of an openness to change became apparent. Participants noted that people were gradually responsive to new ideas; additionally, more individuals and departments began to suggest creative approaches. The experience of success began to spark further interest in experimentation. A professor explained, “We’re willing to try new things. We have seen that you can take risks, and it can turn out well. We have that in our paradigm now.”

A corresponding factor to the openness to change was the tangible beneficial result experienced by faculty members receiving increased salaries, fulfilling an earlier commitment from administrators to improve compensation. These raises could be provided as the institution recovered from the financial crisis, developed stability, and prioritized improved salaries for use of the additional funds that had been generated. One administrator described how this strategy impacted the openness to change:

There is an environment, including faculty, that is very open to change because it was successful. They were seeing a lot of red ink. They were seeing [negative] financial surprises at the end of the year... but they have seen success. They have seen things turning around. Faculty salaries are now in the upper percentile [of comparable institutions].

The emerging environment with an openness to change was influenced in large part by the interest of institutional leaders, especially Dr. Smith, in exploring new ideas at a fast pace. During the implementing change phase, executive leaders determined that due to the rapid pace of change, encouraging feedback from faculty was important to maintain buy-in.

Encouraging feedback. As Program College implemented the comprehensive change initiative, cabinet-level administrators committed to ensuring feedback (particularly from faculty) was encouraged and received. To ensure a variety of voices were being heard, channels for communication were created. One primary strategy was the development of a new faculty committee whose members could discuss concerns, questions, or ideas with the provost. The group was also tasked with conducting surveys of professors to collect input about the comprehensive change initiative. In subsequent years, the practice of surveying professors has continued.

Dr. Smith explained these steps were taken during a time period when some frustrations with administrative leadership were surfacing; finding constructive ways to hear and respond to employee feedback was essential. He stated:

We did an objective online survey with our faculty... then we did extensive qualitative interviews. I put a committee of faculty together. I had worked in a union environment at one school, a faculty union. You want to know what people are doing, control in a sense, a “little c,” the input and frustration, so... during those interviews, stuff came out more.

One professor explained this strategy has enhanced morale, especially compared to the motivating change phase when the speed of implementation overwhelmed some concerns. She stated:

There's a new faculty committee... and some concerns have been researched. How are you doing? How do you sense the students are learning? What concerns do you have? Initially, the response was, we are moving forward. Now that we've had a few years to implement all of this, the response is, let's get some perspective and see how it's going. Are there things we need to tweak? Are there concerns we need to address?'

These methods of dialoguing with a representative committee of faculty, along with regularly conducting surveys, proved to be effective in identifying and resolving issues before they blossomed into difficulties that would harm the implementation of the comprehensive change initiative. As challenges were identified, senior-level administrators worked to resolve or adapt some issues; in some cases, institutional leaders determined a challenge was a reality of the new model and people would adapt to the change.

During the implementing change phase, there were small pockets of resistance related to portions of the envisioned comprehensive change. Administrators addressed concerns through dialogue with these individuals, along with a demonstrated commitment to continuing forward with the plan. One staff member described how she observed the response from administrative leaders to resistance:

There was one department that had a little more difficulty in coming around. The result was continued conversations. We just had to keep revisiting it. Not as a

way of beating a dead horse, but more in the sense of: “We need to get on the same page. That’s not optional. We just need to get on the same page.” It did involve Dr. Smith and other key people from time to time in conversations to continue to speak the same message, “This is what we need to do. This is what’s best.” A bit of repeating the theme needed to happen for that situation to become less resistant.

Along with achieving early success and encouraging feedback, another environmental characteristic during the implementing change phase was increasing accountability.

Increasing accountability. During the implementing change phase, cabinet-level administrators made a concentrated effort to increase the performance accountability of employees. Administrative participants described their recognition that increasing the momentum for the innovative environment being cultivated would require a consistent emphasis on competence and accountability. This focus on results led to changes being made to structures and personnel to fit shifting needs. Dr. Smith explained this approach was a key environmental characteristic for developing creative solutions. He stated there has to be “a willingness to rethink and reorganize at the unit level if things don’t fit the same way anymore.” The institution’s strategic plan includes an emphasis on hiring “the right employee” and emphasizes the need to train managers to identify desired characteristics of innovation and willingness to change when recruiting potential employees.

Moving the institution in the direction of greater accountability and expectations of competence resulted in increased employee transitions as explained by one administrator:

One of the biggest downfalls is putting people into jobs because they're really nice people or we're a really nice organization, and they've been here a long time. While I think you try to do as much of that as you can, the person has to be competent in the job, otherwise you're not doing a service to the school. If that becomes too prevalent, you begin to create very significant weaknesses in the organization. We've had to make some very tough decisions and changes and hopefully we're breaking that mold a little bit. It's happening in at least a few of the different senior administrators' organizations, as compassionately and as nicely as we can. In many cases, it's not a matter of eliminating a person from the campus; it's redirecting them and helping them find a better location. There have been quite a number of success stories in that regard.

Participants identified such changes in relation to personnel as representing a significant cultural shift for the institution.

In addition to changing orientation toward hiring personnel and appropriate job placements, other participants highlighted an increasing emphasis on accountability by discussing the process of setting goals and then measuring results. One administrator described having a requirement of "a certain level of performance long term" for employees in her department. Another administrator explained how this process had reshaped his area of responsibility:

We really started with the systems and processes, getting our database in order, and setting up measurable goals and clear expectations for staff. Then there were some staff who were ready to take on that challenge and others who didn't feel like that was a vision they could follow, so they moved on. We hired a good 60%

to 70% of our staff. Each one of those has come because they're excited about what's going on and what the future holds. Hiring people who really bought into the idea of, "I want to be held accountable. I'm thoroughly excited about Program College's vision and the momentum." It was very important when we showed people that there was accountability at all levels.

As reflected in these comments, there were difficulties in increasing accountability within the organization, but cabinet-level administrators demonstrated a continuing resolve to press on with the comprehensive change initiative. Additionally, following the successful implementation of this initiative, a larger goal formed to cultivate an environment conducive to ongoing change.

Sustaining Change

Having previously described the phases of motivating change and implementing change, the final phase of this case study explores the characteristics of Program College as the institution sustains an environment conducive for change. In the 5 years since the comprehensive change initiative was first implemented, the institution has experienced significant enrollment growth of nearly 50%, along with an improvement in student retention rates, resulting in new residence halls being built, with further housing projects in development. Following the success of the comprehensive change initiative for traditional undergraduate students, additional changes have been implemented, including new delivery models, locations, and programs, as well as experimental pricing structures. Changes have continued for the traditional undergraduate population, along with attempts to expand the student population at the institution. This section describes the themes that emerged from the data analysis related to the sustaining change phase at Program

College: a new identity, executive leaders driving change, market-oriented activity, change becoming the new normal, maintaining trust, collaboration, strategic communication, and navigating challenges.

New identity. The experiences at Program College of implementing the comprehensive change initiative followed by additional changes have begun to shape a new identity in which employees view the institution as being an innovative leader in higher education. Several national and regional publications have featured stories about Program College, highlighting the innovative efforts that have occurred in recent years. Dr. Smith has been invited to speak at panels or other events in the state, often as the only representative from a private institution. A staff member described the changes that have occurred in recent years as “highly successful. I’ve read some articles that the university has shared with the staff about being recognized across the nation for the innovative process that we’ve been going through to make these changes.” As the reputation of the institution has shifted to one of leadership in relation to innovation and change, that image has been increasingly presented to prospective students, parents, and families. The institutional website and marketing materials include a focus on the innovations that have been developed in recent years along with an emphasis on affordability.

Compared to the concern about survival less than a decade ago, the new identity has created excitement among employees, as reflected in the comments of one administrator:

We feel like we’re contributing. Some people think we’re nuts, but that’s all right. We’re at least known to be nuts. We weren’t known before and that’s fun. You feel like you’re making change. It’s not perfect, but we’re hitting some

pitches and that's motivating. If you're competitive, aggressive, want to make a dent in this field of higher education.... I want to work and be known for something... and we pass that on to our staff. This is an exciting place to be. We work hard, but it's exciting.

Several participants who have worked at Program College for the duration of these changes noted the radical shift from previous concern about survival to now being a place others view as an innovative leader. One administrator explained:

Much of what we were doing and the driving force was the threat that it comes from. Initially, the threat was if we do not do something, it will not matter because we will not be here. One step beyond that now comes the more offensive motivation... how can we make this a great place?

Participants described how the image of being a thriving institution has contributed to attracting well-qualified faculty and staff. One administrator explained, "People are seeing exciting things going on here and they want to be part of something.... We're getting a high caliber of people that want to come and be a part of our team." Similarly, a staff member described his view that higher education institutions will have to change to thrive in the future, thus leading to his desire to work at Program College because of the innovation that has been occurring.

For the institution to continue leading in the field, institutional leaders have recognized and communicated a need to continue implementing successful changes. One administrator stated:

We've had record enrollments for the last 4 years. In the landscape of Christian higher education especially, with schools closing, we're incredibly grateful to

God because He's been very gracious to us. But we don't think we can rest for a day. It's still a world in which you need to innovate or you're probably not going to survive.

This concern for survival was still evident in the data at this sustaining change phase, although the urgency had shifted to expanding the mission and breadth of the institution. The efforts during the sustaining change phase continue to be driven by executive leaders, with an expanded group of change agents now involved at the cabinet-level.

Executive leaders driving change. During the phases of motivating and implementing change at Program College, senior leaders played a key role in catalyzing change. This approach has continued into the sustaining change phase and expanded with intentional efforts to increase the number of change agents at the cabinet level. Following the transition to the role of president, Dr. Smith began hiring additional administrative leaders who could contribute to an innovative environment and pursuing further change. The view that institutional leadership played a central role was reflected in an administrator's comments, "While some organizations can be successful in spite of their leadership, true leadership... is key to change."

Presidential leadership. Participants frequently spoke of Dr. Smith as continuing to provide much of the impetus and energy for change to occur at Program College in his role as president. During the sustaining change phase, Dr. Smith has pushed for further change, which one cabinet-level administrator viewed as overdue:

There was opportunity because there were so many areas in which we could develop, grow a program, or offer something new. We were so traditional that

there was low-hanging fruit in so many areas. But it took somebody to come in and say we're going to do it. He stirred the pot to help us move and do stuff. It was clear from the data that Dr. Smith's visionary approach, transparency, high energy, and commitment to change contributed to the ability to sustain change at Program College.

Visionary approach. Dr. Smith was described as the visionary for the institution and someone continually presenting aspirational reasons for ongoing change. One administrator said the president's "got to be the visionary, the general on the hill, the motivator, the champion, and he is." Participants also explained that the president's vision for the institution is connected to preparation for the future. Numerous faculty and staff expressed their perception that Dr. Smith was not only an expert when it comes to understanding the current higher education landscape, but also someone who was able to forecast future needs and issues. A professor explained, "We have a very innovative, future-directed president who seems to know what is on the horizon and what we need to be doing, even before others are doing it." Dr. Smith's ability to absorb and disseminate so much information at a proficient level enhances trust from employees. One professor said, "It gives you a lot of trust to say, 'Okay, if he's moving, we better go with him.'" Faculty and staff members communicated a willingness to continue working on change initiatives because of this trust level.

The description of Dr. Smith as the visionary was also linked to his ideas for change initiatives. One administrator described Dr. Smith as someone who "thinks innovatively. He is very courageous, and he just knows how to make things happen." Participants recognized Dr. Smith as someone who consistently generated creative ideas

due to his understanding of national and global events along with business and education models. One administrator stated, “You hear about people thinking inside and outside the box; Dr. Smith does not know there is a box. He is a very innovative, creative change agent here.” Several participants explained they would be surprised if, during a meeting, Dr. Smith did not suggest new ideas.

Some participants expressed a recognition that for people in the organization who are not prepared to change at the same pace as Dr. Smith, the number of creative ideas he generates can feel overwhelming. One administrator recounted:

People will tell you he has too many ideas. It’s very unconventional the number of ideas he has. If you compare it to a very successful public company in relation to our size, he’s got a lot of ideas for what people can handle. He’s just got that entrepreneurial bent.... It’s just which ones are going to bubble to the surface. He’s pretty good too about understanding that you can only do so much at a given point in time.

Dr. Smith himself referenced a concern about the possibility that he might offer too many ideas:

I think if you ask people about me, they’ll say they wish I would slow down a little bit. He’s got a zillion ideas going a mile a minute. Some are proven, some aren’t. We need to just stick with what we have for a while before we change.

Overall, the employees of Program College who were interviewed were appreciative of the innovation and ideas generated by Dr. Smith because of the successes experienced at the institution. One administrator summarized the perspective of many of those interviewed, “The president has demonstrated quite a successful track record and ability

to discern and have his hand on the pulse of what works.” In addition to his visionary approach to leadership, Dr. Smith is viewed as a transparent leader, another contributor to the presidential leadership during the sustaining change phase.

Transparent leader. Dr. Smith was consistently described as a transparent leader, a style that enhanced trust in him personally as well as initiatives that have been proposed for the institution. During the sustaining change phase, as Program College continues to pursue new approaches, this transparency has contributed to ongoing change, as one administrator explained:

Most people trust and like him. He’s very charismatic. They see him as somebody who follows through and is transparent. If he didn’t have all those qualities and all he did was [implement] change, it would be a lot harder. He needed those other characteristics to enable change to take place and to be able to bring people along.

Several participants spoke about the president’s transparency in communication as a key factor in building and maintaining trust and buy-in throughout the organization. One administrator stated, “He has been the most transparent president I’ve ever worked for. We don’t make any decisions in those cabinet meetings that are not fully communicated to the trustees and to the entire organization, whether it’s good or bad.” In addition to his visionary and transparent leadership style, Dr. Smith consistently demonstrates high energy in promoting change efforts.

High energy. Several participants identified the high energy of the president, which they perceived to have significantly contributed to moving projects forward during the sustaining change phase. One administrator described this dimension of the

president's personality: "He is always thinking. I tell people his shadow has a hard time keeping up with him." Another administrator said about working with Dr. Smith:

We typically have five to eight projects of some sort going on at all times. I am currently in the process of working on at least a handful of different contracts, either acquiring properties or starting a different venture, a new model process and new relationship, and a new partnership with another school, etc.

According to various participants, seeing that level of commitment from the president has energized other people in the organization in working toward change.

Commitment to change. Dr. Smith was repeatedly described as being committed to implementing positive changes, which provides motivation to the community during the sustaining change phase. People viewed him as cultivating an atmosphere in which change was both possible and expected, as one staff member explained:

He is definitely one of those change agents that's from the core, wired to be about innovation. It's just who he is. You don't ever feel like he's trying to put this on, or do this because he's in this role. It's in his fiber. That's inspiring. He believes deeply in the things he wants us to move toward, and you sense that. He's genuine about it, vs. feeling like he's trying to keep up with something. He's definitely at the helm in that image, leading the group toward those things that he deeply believes we need to walk toward. Obviously, as staff members, we sense that... this is the direction that we need to go, and it comes from something deep within him.

In describing his own leadership approach, Dr. Smith explained his conviction that in some scenarios, creating an environment in which change is supported could be

more important than the success of a single idea. He identified one strategy of supporting ideas and initiatives with encouragement and resources, even if he is unsure of the potential for success, which he viewed as catalyzing others to also work on new approaches. In addition, Dr. Smith described himself as continually communicating about the need to focus on mission with a willingness to adapt methods. For example, he provided updates about change initiatives at other institutions through emails sent to all employees or presentations at monthly employee meetings. Thus, the need for ongoing change is emphasized as well as casting a vision for why being different is important.

In recent years following the transition from the provost's role into the presidency, Dr. Smith has focused more on advancement work rather than campus-based academic initiatives. The president described this shift in his priorities: "I'm a hands-on person. I'm pragmatic, so as a provost, I was involved in a lot of the detail. I've had to back off, because half or 60% of my time now is on fundraising." When needed, however, the president continued to engage with faculty and staff when doing so assisted with change initiatives. As an example, Dr. Smith cited a meeting he had recently conducted with managers to thank them for the progress made in developing new educational models. In the same meeting, he provided a reminder about the changing demographics of students at the institution and how new programs and delivery models launched in recent years align with Program College's mission. The president's contributions during this type of meeting allowed him to continue to cast the vision for the institution and to reinforce the need to differentiate the institution from others. This approach also helped to communicate with managers the importance of ongoing support

for innovative approaches, recognizing that any particular department has the potential to create unnecessary hurdles.

Despite the advancements that have occurred at Program College in recent years, Dr. Smith continues to believe additional change is necessary. One administrator explained:

Our peers say, “Your institution is so far ahead of everyone else,” generally speaking. In our president’s eyes, we are late to the game on so many of these [initiatives]. It is an interesting dynamic in that you have somebody who sees how fragile we are and believes that unless we have all these different change initiatives, unless we change, we will cease to exist. We have to diversify our programs.

Dr. Smith’s perspective that affirms the advancements made but also demands continued efforts to change and innovate contributed to the approach to extend executive efforts in driving change by intentionally expanding cabinet-level leadership.

Expanding cabinet-level leadership. During the sustaining change phase at Program College, participants explained that cabinet-level administrators are increasingly contributing to change efforts. A significant step in broadening the role of executives was an intentional effort by Dr. Smith to hire new senior leaders who were viewed as highly competent, supportive of the new direction of the institution, and prepared to lead change efforts. One participant described the recently hired executives as “reinforcements” for continuing the change efforts that followed up on the comprehensive change initiative.

The governance structure that was adjusted during the motivating change phase continues to rely on substantial contributions by cabinet-level administrators. A staff member explained:

The institution is very administrative. Faculty governance definitely exists, but when you think of it from a traditional standpoint... administration oversees the governance. I would not call it heavy handed, but there is a respect for authority. There is a trust that exists in the administration. The faculty believe if this is where the leadership is guiding or believes we need to go, then they get onboard and they go.

This approach to governance has allowed the newly crafted cabinet-level leadership team to provide the impetus for continuing change efforts.

Executive leaders discussed a desire to develop and implement initiatives at a pace that meets external needs, while not demanding excessive efforts from faculty and staff. One senior leader explained the need for a “reasonable, logical approach and timetable for change initiatives. You don’t set the timetable to fit the absolute last adopters. You do have to take everything into account and give a reasonable time for buy in.” Another administrator described a balance of engaging with questions or resistance but also pushing forward. He explained:

There’s a fine line between being patient with the process and pushing. If you’re too patient, you lose momentum. Sometimes there’s a window of opportunity for significant change, and you’ve got to push. It’s important to know how to push people and listen, and yet help them see we’ve got to change or else bad things will happen.

These comments reflected a general understanding that the employees of Program College were committed to working through the challenges of implementing an initiative, but it was cabinet-level administrators who would keep working to ensure that a project did not become stalled.

Although change is primarily instigated by administrators, senior leaders demonstrated significant respect for the work of the faculty. For example, Dr. Smith explained that one of the primary characteristics he has observed within an institution that could prohibit creative solutions was a lack of respect for faculty:

It's terrible if you make that known and we had some of that [lack of respect].

That's one that will restrict change. It's a balance, because faculty can't run everything, but you've got to respect them. They're like independent contractors and you've got to be the general contractor.

One professor described how the accessibility of administrators contributed to positive feelings among faculty:

There's a good respect for our leadership here. They're not dictators. They're open to dialogue.... Our administrators, most of us know them well enough that there's not a lot of formality. We go to coffee with them. You can just meet them wherever and talk about other things. So there's kind of that good feeling here.

This perception of access has been cultivated by an "open door" policy from administrators. A sense of accessibility was also supported by the relatively small size of the institution and surrounding community which allows frequent interactions in various settings.

Although cabinet-level leaders are primarily driving change, they are also cultivating an environment in which staff and faculty can propose or get involved with new initiatives. One staff member explained:

Change in some ways is top-down, but in other ways, because of the acceptance of it being embraced at the top, it is also encouraged at all other levels as well.

The changes we are making here in this department... did not have to go through a lot of approval.... It's been iterated over and over, you do what you need to do.

There is not that control of change because it is pervasive.

This section has described how executive leaders drive change at Program College during the sustaining change phase, with specific attention to presidential leadership and the expanding role of cabinet-level leaders. The next section addresses the characteristic of market-oriented activity, which provides the foundation for change initiatives.

Market-oriented activity. During the motivating change phase, executive leaders initiated intentional efforts to develop awareness about the regional and national context in which Program College operates. Following implementation of the comprehensive change initiative, there has been an increasing market-orientation that drives change activity with a goal of proactively addressing anticipated needs in the area. The data from this study demonstrated that the impetus for market-oriented activity was drawn from continually evaluating the regional context and national trends and developing an increasing reliance on data.

Continually evaluating regional context. Participants throughout the institution demonstrated a thorough understanding of the regional factors that impact the institution

as well as the student population. One professor identified the need to continually making changes and prepare for the future based on the regional situation. He stated:

What are we going to do to compete in the next 25 years of education? How are we going to be relevant and current? We're in the melting pot of colleges. You can drive in the region and see so many institutions. I can go on down a list of seven or eight schools.... Do we have a diversity in our portfolio to sustain economic shifts and waves in the marketplace? Are we ready for that? Years ago we weren't, but we're getting better at it. To say we're insulated from it, I don't think so.

Administrators, faculty, and staff articulated their understanding of the factors that informed enrollment decisions for families and students within the region, which continues to be impacted by economic difficulties. The president explained how these issues remain a focus:

I talk a lot about faith-based affordable excellence. We have a lot of needy kids in our student body and a lot of first-generation students. Almost 40% of our students receive Pell Grants, so cost and affordability is important.

Individuals frequently referred to the "value proposition" as being an essential factor for students and families when choosing a college. One staff member stated:

The environment of higher education and the marketplace is such that parents and families are looking for cost effective avenues for education. It is difficult to compete with state schools naturally, but we have a competitive product. We are marketing it in such a way that folks take a look at this because there is something here.

Recognizing that economic factors (e.g., tuition cost, debt levels, and employment possibilities following graduation) drive student choices, participants expressed a desire that the institution continue to find ways to provide value for students.

Faculty and staff mentioned having observed positive responses from students and parents to the changes that have been implemented. One professor said, “We know that what’s good for our families, and the families of the students that come here, is eventually going to be good for the institution.” The understanding of the regional context has also impacted planning for future academic programs. One dean explained his efforts to launch a unique academic program, one that typically would not be available at a liberal arts institution, but could serve the needs of Program College’s constituency. The dean described receptivity from other academic leaders because of the institutional emphasis on aligning programs, delivery modes, and services with student needs from that geographic region. Along with actively evaluating regional context to drive action, participants demonstrated a need to sustain change efforts based on national trends.

Continually evaluating national trends. Participants gave evidence of understanding the financial realities that confront colleges and universities nationally, which are also applicable to Program College leaders. An administrator stated, “We all understand the situation we’re in. The way I depict it is we’re stable but fragile. Non-profit Christian higher education, in an institution without a large endowment, is a very difficult business model today.” One staff member explained that faculty and staff have recognized the fragile financial picture for small, private universities. He said:

The survival issue has been hitting home as more and more articles come out that this school is merging with this school, or this school is closing. There's just this global understanding that higher education is crazy right now. I don't know if that's going to change in our professional lifetime.

Participants from all levels of the institution communicated that this financial context for higher education is a key part of sustaining change efforts at Program College.

The awareness of institutions merging or closing has prompted a desire across Program College to see the institution not only survive, but ultimately thrive. One professor stated:

We keep hearing about Christian colleges that are closing; it's really sad. I just learned a couple weeks ago that Clearwater Christian, down in Florida was closing. I have known people who have gone there, and I think, "Wow." I guess everybody's feeling this, "What can we do to make sure that we not only survive but we grow?" It takes a certain number of students to be able to pay the bills, so it is a matter of growing and thriving and surviving and making sure students choose us.

Participants expressed an understanding that enrollment growth in various delivery models is necessary, given Program College's minimal endowment.

The attentiveness to national trends has also impacted planning for the future and action at the institution. One staff member explained:

We keep hearing about, or reading articles in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, about government mandate and starting to require reporting of placement rates and income level of graduates, and these responsibility scores. It's something that

I feel like government ultimately will be an influence to say, “How successful are you? What’s your debt load on your students?”

Directing attention to accountability issues has been prompted by a market-orientation and resulted in an increasing focus on collecting data, tracking results, and making decisions based on that information.

Informed by data. During the motivating change phase, institutional leadership took initial steps to base decisions and data collection and analysis. Participants identified this area as one of significant growth during the sustaining change as well as an identified need for ongoing improvement into the future. Dr. Smith has emphasized the reliance on data for making decisions and worked to expand this attitude throughout the institution. He stated, “I’m not saying I’m 100%, but I’m pretty much data driven when it comes to what we’re working on.” Administrators took a key step in demonstrating the importance of enhancing data collection and analysis capabilities by hiring an individual for an institutional research position to focus on improving processes and disseminating results.

The result of this emphasis on becoming data-driven in the decision-making process has ensured institutional leaders rely on “evidence” rather than perception, as one cabinet-level administrator explained:

We’re learning that there needs to be some criteria against which to judge some of these ideas. Initially, there was a lot of feeling that something seems like a good idea or my gut tells me. Sometimes there can be wisdom and truth in that, but sometimes that’s not enough. You need the evidence, history, or detail to help

bring people along or help make sure you're basing this on something other than just a good feeling.

Another administrator explained how the research process for one recent change initiative enhanced the model that was rolled out. He stated:

It was a combination of soliciting good research to understand the market, looking at the success and failure of others, and not being the first. We were not the change leader in this, but understanding where others had succeeded and failed, and not wanting to replicate the same model, we took a bit of a hybrid approach.

This approach to change demonstrated an improved ability to apply knowledge gained from data collection and craft an innovative approach unique to Program College.

The awareness of regional context and national trends, along with a reliance on data, has prompted ongoing creative activity. An administrator explained how the understanding of context has related to implementing change:

This all goes to leadership; who are motivated and know we need creative solutions to navigate this higher education landscape. It seems to be a rather hostile environment where private higher education is concerned. We are not a group of people who have stuck our heads in the sand. We've said there will be change and it's the new normal.

This description of change as the new normal was prevalent among employees and introduces the next environmental characteristic of a change-oriented environment.

Change becoming the new normal. Based on demonstrated success of the comprehensive change initiative, as well as subsequent innovative projects, participants described a new environment in which change has become the new normal. An

administrator who has worked at the institution for 15 months observed: “[There] is an ethos and an environment that is very open to change here.” A professor stated, “I think Program College, our whole family here, is quite receptive. We realize that we need to try initiatives. We need to do new things if we are going to make it.” A staff member explained:

There is definitely a culture in which change is valued. The idea of the tried and true, stay the course, do what works, not that those are negative things, but there's definitely a culture here with the idea that we need to change.

Additionally, participants noted that over time, an increasing number of faculty and staff were attracted to work in an environment where change was becoming increasingly common. One staff member explained, “Most of the hires academically know well that Program College is a place of change and innovation. So they are accepting or enjoy change as faculty.” The new environment contributes to sustaining change by describing a change-orientation, willingness to try new approaches, and ability to continually adapt.

Change-orientation. The environment at Program College is oriented toward change, in that employees anticipate and expect new initiatives and are receptive to creative ideas. People who worked at the institution prior to the comprehensive change initiative commented that the status quo has transitioned from stagnation to change-orientation because of a successful track record with initiatives. An administrator explained:

This is how we do business now. It is very different than what it was before, but it is not a temporary thing. This is a permanent thing and the new normal. There

is an acceptance and expectation for change, and nobody is surprised when somebody has a new idea.

Participants described change as the “new normal” and an “expected” part of the environment. This anticipation of change has become prominent. One staff member stated:

Change is welcomed, really encouraged, and in some ways it is expected.... The idea is we have to always be moving forward in good ways and take leaps in good directions. It is not just business as usual; it is always about what’s next. You feel that moving, energy, and theme all the time as a manager. I have to always be thinking, how can we keep growing in good ways?

Dr. Smith continues to contribute to a change-orientation by generating and communicating ideas. The team surrounding him has come to expect innovation to the extent that it is more surprising if there is not discussion about new approaches. One administrator explained this approach to change:

It’s part of our daily business now. I don’t think anybody is surprised at a new idea. Nobody is surprised when the president comes up with some new idea. We’re not shocked and asking, “Where did that come from?” It’s almost funny now with people saying, “That’s the only idea you had today?” There is an acceptance and even expectation, because of the frequency with which change has happened.

Employees have accepted the regular presentation of new approaches to the extent that it has become routine. One staff member suggested that if the president appeared at an

employee meeting without announcing something new, “Everybody would kind of wonder what was going on. It is almost an expectation that it has become who we are.”

This change-oriented environment has encouraged more staff and faculty to propose their own ideas. An administrator stated:

People have new ideas and think about... what if we did this, what would happen? That has been a marvelous byproduct. If something is new, it isn't frowned on. I don't hear a lot of yapping about, “I remember, we had another great new idea and that didn't happen.”

One faculty member explained that there is a new ethos among professors compared to 10 years ago. He stated, “There's a different... zeitgeist, spirit of the day, a different feel. And the fact that people have seen, ‘Wow, this is really working.’ And people are excited about it.”

People feel like they can talk about new approaches and suggest ideas because of the receptive response to dialogue. One administrator highlighted the typical posture of people when considering new ideas. He stated:

One of the things I really found interesting here was the responsiveness. Rarely is the first reaction to a new idea or concept, “That won't work.” It is usually, “We should look into that. Let's see if that's an option. We should learn more about it.” That culture of no new idea is a bad idea and every idea is at least worth exploring to some extent, has become part of our ethos. That's only opened up more opportunities because more people have come and said, “I have a new idea for Program College to consider. I know Program College is a place that will at least think about it.”

Participants expressed an openness at all levels of the organization to discuss and evaluate ideas, along with open channels for ideas to be presented to executives.

An administrator recognized that this openness to change is unique among higher education institutions. She stated that being “nimble” was an essential characteristic for identifying creative solutions. She continued, “Sometimes things take forever in higher education to get done... the ability to generate ideas and move on them quickly either to take action or to decide you’re not going to take action is important.” These comments also introduce a willingness to try new approaches that is demonstrable during the sustaining change phase, also reflecting the characteristic of change as the new normal at Program College.

Willingness to try new approaches. Experimentation has become a regular activity throughout the institution, including academics, student life, and enrollment during the sustaining change phase. The president identified the environmental characteristic of experimentation as a key element to sustaining change. He described the institution as “a place where you can try things and not everything’s going to work, and we’re okay with that.” Participants explained that people feel a freedom to try new initiatives, and if elements do not work out, to adjust or learn from failures. One staff member stated:

We are not afraid to try things. We have not been afraid to try an initiative that did not work out. I think we learned from that. We are trying a different approach now... We do not totally run away from something when it fails. We try to salvage the good out of that.

These comments reflected a common perception that people feel supported to try new ideas without worrying about failure.

One particular form of experimentation frequently referenced has been an institutional willingness to attempt unique partnerships. For example, Program College has partnered with two other institutions to offer degrees rather than develop new programs for which they do not have expertise available. One administrator stated:

One of the things that has been a big deal for us, and there will be more and more, is being willing to evaluate possible partnerships, whether academic programs or other majors, partnerships with secondary schools, or community colleges... That is a word that seems to rise to the surface all the time, a willingness to partner with competitors.

Participants noted that this type of approach is unique to higher education because institutions frequently want to maintain sole control of programs.

During the sustaining change phase, employees have also developed new skills and attitudes related to experimentation. One staff member said:

What we're creating is skill sets in a lot of people and a willingness and a success. People feel like we did that before, there is freedom in trying it again, let's do it again. And there is not that fear of change and fear of trying something new that might happen if you felt like... we have always done it this way.

This skill creation related to experimentation has been developed through constantly creating and implementing new initiatives and learning from failures.

This willingness to experiment occasionally results in difficulties as administrators determined which new initiatives to pursue. One professor explained how exploring various possibilities occasionally caused a level of frustration:

The downside of being in a really innovative place is there are times when an effort will start and you put an awful lot of time, effort, and resource into heading that direction, and then something else will pop up that is more promising.... It's like ADOS, it is "attention deficit ooh shiny." I have folders of things that we started working on, we got a year into, and then a grant opportunity came along, and the first project just fizzled and was gone.

Along with an environment that reflects change-orientation and a willingness to try new approaches, the third element of the changing environment is an expectation for adaptation to continually occur.

Continually adapting. Participants expressed an understanding that during the sustaining change phase, the implementation of an initiative is not the final step but must include ongoing learning and adjustments. One professor explained:

We know that whatever we do is not going to be perfect the first time. We are going to have to adjust a little bit and flex. Things are almost constantly in some state of change, which can be disconcerting for people who like to have things the same all the time. We now have a culture that thrives on it and is always looking for new ways to do things.

Participants recognized that institutional leaders and initiative participants work diligently to research approaches, but they will not be able to forecast all issues. One administrator explained that "when you change the institution, you do not see everything

at all. You are [going] tree by tree, and you do not always see the forest.” People described the necessity of implementing modifications after launching initiatives to respond to new learning or challenges.

One advancement in recent years is that more of the adaptation and learning are occurring prior to the launch of an initiative. An administrator described this type of adaptation that occurred during the planning for a recent significant change initiative:

It was a situation where the first several iterations weren't working for one reason or another. We kept going back to the drawing board and saying, if that's not going to work, then what? Each of the various disciplines had to come together to work toward a solution. The ultimate solution of what we're offering isn't anywhere close to what we initially had envisioned.

This development was viewed as improving the potential for success and reducing the learning curve after an initiative has been launched.

One staff member identified an increased level of creativity within the organization, particularly connected to evaluating and adjusting programs that are not working. She explained:

Stuff that hasn't been working, you've got to rethink it and think outside the box, because otherwise you'll just repeat the same sort of problems. The idea of thinking beyond what everyone else is doing, or even beyond the obvious next step to wondering, what if? There are good, skilled thinkers who are naturally creative who help lead the way. Others maybe don't have that giftedness, but there are plenty of people who do. You find yourself inspired by those folks to think, maybe there are other ways.

This spreading of creative thinking throughout the institution has begun to encourage new adaptations prompted by managers and faculty.

One administrator described the pace and nature of the change at Program now, with adaptation consistently occurring:

Change happens quickly and we're always at multiple stages of change. It's not sequential at all. It's concurrent in a lot of different areas. Complexity is pretty significant when you think about a lot of change happening very quickly in a lot of different areas.

Thus, some employees can encounter challenges, such as communication issues or learning about an initiative late in the process, from the ongoing nature of adaptation.

Despite these challenges, participants reflected an attitude of congeniality and commitment to make things work. One staff member stated:

When those challenges come up, I do not see the push back of everything is on this system and you just have to deal with it. It is more like, what do we need? What kind of tweaking can we do to make it work? Maybe that is part of the culture of change. Nothing is, "here is the change; we are done." It is, "here is the change we are starting. Maybe next year, we are going to do it a little bit different this way and we are going to do it a little bit different this way, and we are going to keep making it better." It is not change and done, but this is the start and let's keep making it better.

This section has described the environmental characteristic of changing the environment, which has been made possible at Program College through maintaining trust, as discussed in the following section.

Maintaining trust. During the stages of motivating and implementing change, trust between administrators and faculty was identified by participants as being a key factor. As the institution has shifted into the sustaining change phase, employees reported that they retained a high level of trust in the president and other executive leaders who are catalyzing change. Participants consistently identified trust as a reason for proceeding with change initiatives. The data reflected trust for the president and administrators, among executive leaders, and a general willingness to grant people the benefit of the doubt.

The president has gained and maintained trust from people in the organization through communicating honestly as well as honoring commitments. An administrator explained that Dr. Smith is dedicated to fulfilling promises made to faculty, even in scenarios in which there may be pragmatic benefits to using resources in a different manner. She said, “Keeping his word is very important to him. People see that and so they trust this change—that it’s not just this pie in the sky kind of idea that this crazy man is coming up with.” One professor affirmed the trust in the president, saying that since “people believed in Dr. Smith’s leadership and trusted him, the ability to make change occur has been a little easier for us.”

Dr. Smith cited trust as a key environmental characteristic for allowing creative solutions to be developed in higher education institutions:

Trust is a really big one. I can say it’s needed a lot easier than how you get it. When you don’t have trust... you can hardly get anything [done]... You need trust in the administration... a confidence, willingness to go along, to let them lead.

The president recognized the high level of trust for administrators at Program College. He explained, “It’s pretty remarkable the level of trust and confidence in the midst of massive change.” Dr. Smith and other administrators communicated a commitment to preserving the trust among executives and faculty as the institution moves forward.

Faculty and staff consistently expressed admiration for the character and goals of administrators, which allows trusting in the new directions of the institution. One professor said about the “trustworthiness” of administrators:

When you know they have your best and the institution’s best in mind always and that this is not personal, you can trust them. If you could not trust them, then every decision they make, you would wonder, “I wonder what they did that for?”

These comments reflected a common perception that executive leaders maintained positive goals for the organization and its people. One administrator stated, “Faculty jumped on board. Our faculty are reasonably responsive to the administration. If you look at statistics and tools we’ve used here to assess, the trust in us is strong and so they responded. That’s the key.” These types of comments demonstrated the ability of administrators to maintain the necessary level of trust during the sustaining change phase.

The second level of trust identified at Program College was between executive leaders. As previously mentioned, the president has hired several new executive leaders in recent years. Administrators spoke about the ability of this group to work together on change initiatives due to trust. One administrator stated about this newly crafted executive team:

There are no barriers. You got to get rid of the junk. It is not competitiveness. It is driving as a team toward goals, job security, learning, and seeing change in

students... There's really no room for territorialism. You have to be really careful of that. Trust is very important and critical.

Several executive leaders described the collegial nature of relationships among administrators, and a trust level that allows risk taking.

Even when trusting administrators is difficult for faculty or staff due to a decision or disagreement, many participants cited an underlying desire to grant the benefit of the doubt. For example, one staff member explained that his approach of “this is what the leadership said, I am under the authority of the leadership, and so I am going to try my best to make this happen.” Several participants described an environment crafted by administrators that allows faculty and staff to ask questions or voice concerns without encountering “push back.” Instead, people believe they can ask questions about how to make an initiative work or discuss adjustments for the future. One staff member explained there is a culture of “giving people the benefit of the doubt” and “working together” through issues. This environmental characteristic of trust has also contributed to increasing collaboration across the institution.

Sweeping collaboration. As Program College has sustained change, a collaborative approach has taken hold throughout the institution. During the motivating change phase, executives engaged faculty and staff for involvement. Those efforts have expanded during the sustaining change phase so employees are intricately involved in the development and implementation stages of initiatives. One professor stated, “A collaborative effort where everybody truly believes we are really literally all in this together is what makes us run.” Review of the data demonstrated collaboration occurring across departments as well as among administrators, faculty, and staff.

The first element of collaboration is that people from all parts of the institution have developed the skills and perspective to work together on the development and implementation of change initiatives. One administrator provided an example from a recent, significant change initiative:

With interaction, involvement, direction from the president and across the board at varying levels from administrators and the board... We had collaboration among all the groups because we had to pull together academics, advancement, enrollment, the business office, and even student affairs to make sure we were looking at issues from all angles.

This spirit of collaboration has allowed working across lines that are often challenging within higher education. One professor stated:

None of the changes would've been possible without a lot of collaboration between the student affairs side of things and academics. That's pretty distinctive to Program College, with so much overlap and collaboration... It has required those two groups to not just communicate, but really work together from the very beginning of projects.

Participants described a consistent ability to collaborate on projects that often could be viewed as the responsibility of one domain.

The second component of collaboration is modeling from the president and executive team for how to work together. One administrator credited the leadership of the president and his focus on creating an "informal" and "open" environment which reminds people not to take themselves too seriously. One staff member said, "There is not this sense of hierarchy. That helps with everyone feeling like my voice matters or if I

have an opinion, I am not going to be struck down for it. I am going to be heard.” Dr. Smith has also encouraged an environment in which people feel there is not a “hierarchy” that prohibits dialogue and collaboration.

Cabinet-level administrators frequently receive positive feedback about their collaborative work together. One executive leader explained:

One of the comments we hear from different groups outside the organization is that they’re amazed at the amount of involvement, interaction, and collaboration that the senior leadership team has. What you have to put aside are the egos and agendas and understand that we’re working for the better good of the entire organization.

The commitment by executive leaders to collaborate has encouraged managers and staff members to also follow this modeling. One staff member explained, “It is a group effort. We talk a lot about what would be best. I try not to do a top-down thing, but bring up ideas, things I have read, things that they have read, and then try it.” Several participants described similar pervasive approaches within their departments.

The third area of collaboration present is among faculty. In addition to working with student life and other departments, professors have demonstrated a strong interest to collaborate on academic projects. For example, one professor explained:

There is a real interest in working together. At other schools, you have more faculty who are really focused on their specific research projects and their autonomy within their classes. There is a strong sense here that we are a community and a desire to interact as a community. Our faculty like to get together and talk, and feel that we are doing something together.

Participants provided examples of faculty collaborating on significant initiatives and smaller projects, such as co-teaching courses. Along with the sweeping collaboration, which is evident during the sustaining change phase, an additional environmental characteristic is strategic communication.

Strategic communication. During the stage of sustaining change, administrators have taken steps to strategically cultivate an environment in which communication occurs and information is disseminated broadly. This section describes efforts to ensure faculty and staff input is received and valued as well as efforts by administrators to communicate consistently and broadly about the ongoing nature of change.

Faculty and staff input. Participants noted that the people who should be able to contribute to initiatives are typically included in the process. One professor explained how executive leaders valuing input has impacted the development of change initiatives:

When an idea comes up for something that's campus-wide, the administration makes sure that the people who need to be involved are sitting at the table so that every voice that needs to be heard is present all the way through the process.

This strategic approach to communication has benefited the institution by identifying issues in advance of launching initiatives, thus limiting failures. One professor stated:

We don't have a lot of failures because as you're thinking things through, you're getting good input from everybody else. There are times where you say, "This isn't worth what we were thinking it was going to do. Let's just not go down this route."

In addition, participants described a level of buy-in to initiatives due to leaning about and contributing to projects in advance. Faculty and staff also noted commitment by administrators to consistently communicate during the sustaining change phase.

Communication by administrators. Executive leaders have taken intentional steps to communicate broadly about change occurring at the institution along with the need for ongoing innovation. A primary method for this strategy continues to be monthly employee meetings, which also occurred during the motivating change phase. Now, rather than focusing on survival, executives from all divisions provide an update on current activities, both positive and negative. From the perspective of administrators, preparing for these regular meetings is a challenge. One administrator described the preparation and purpose of employee meetings:

We take good time to really consider what needs to be communicated in those meetings. Nobody's left out. The financials, advancement, and admissions are an open book, and everybody knows where we sit, good or bad. We try to bring everybody into that process so they understand that these are all institutional priorities that they are a part of. They need to know the good and the bad. That openness, communication, and honesty, is something that's really been developed here.

Several executive leaders explained that this level of communication is a personal stretch and exceeds their prior experiences. Yet the president has committed to open communication, even a "culture of over communication" to broadly share information. Executives who initially had concerns about communicating too much information have

recognized that Dr. Smith's "methods work better" and there are long-term benefits to the strategy.

Faculty and staff expressed appreciation for this style of communication because it allows everyone to have a solid understanding of the institution's status. People have the opportunity to celebrate victories and learn about potential concerns. A professor explained how this communication style has brought unity to the organization:

It's really spelled out for us where we stand, where we are on thin ice, what our bottom line is, and how we're doing. I don't think there's any secrets around here. By everybody knowing all that, we realize we need to pull together to make it go.

One staff member also explained that these meetings contribute to excitement about accomplishments at the institution:

Almost every time we have an employee meeting, we learn about something new that is happening. It is never just the status quo, here is what we have been doing and keep doing it... There is always something that we learn, whether it is fundraising or other initiatives, growth on campus with dorms, or new locations, or new programs starting at those locations. It is exciting to work here during this time. I am really glad I work for a school that is growing and doing big things.

These comments reflected the potential for open communication to extend a sense of collective momentum during the sustaining change phase.

The data demonstrated that the institution's size allows a high level of communication and nimbleness. Employee meetings can be conducted consistently, and

faculty can gather on a regular basis. In addition, the president is able to engage executive leaders quickly and effectively. One administrator explained:

Being small has helped us because the President can bring administrators into a room and get consensus much more quickly. I compare it to driving a semi and having to make a U-turn or a Corvette and having to make a U-turn. We are more like a Corvette. Convertible Corvette, maybe.

The commitment to communication permeates many of the themes discussed during the sustaining change phase, and has been a significant contributor in navigating challenges.

Navigating challenges. During the sustaining change phase, Program College encountered challenges related to increasing expectations among employees, energy levels of employees, and implementing details of initiatives. First, as the institution experienced successes with the comprehensive change initiative and following projects, executive leaders recognized that some people may have expected all initiatives to perform in the same way. Dr. Smith explained the realism that he communicated in attempting to manage expectations:

We had to be careful, as some people think every idea is going to work. But not every idea will. You need to have some strong hits, singles, doubles, or triples, or cut it. We've done some changes in one initiative and haven't quite cut it, but it's come close.

Faculty and staff participants communicated their perception that executive leaders were sensitive to concerns related to failing initiatives and open about the possibilities of failure.

Second, Program College has encountered challenges in relation to the energy level of employees. Some participants communicated a level of weariness after so much energy has been directed toward significant change initiatives in recent years. One professor explained:

Everybody is tired. To say we're going to change something else... we have a lot of trust built up with each other but we don't have a lot of energy to tackle huge new things. We're still trying to get our feet underneath us and understand what the implications are of this... we're all spread pretty thin. Change is a good thing but we're not necessarily going to go out and tackle a lot more because it's like, we're so done. Can we just live in the new normal for a little bit?

This concern about workload and energy levels was the challenge most frequently identified by participants in relation to the sustaining change phase.

In response, institutional leaders recognize there are difficulties associated with change initiatives. Some cabinet-level administrators expressed the awareness that staff and faculty can feel understaffed; others recognized the allure of the status quo at times. Yet cabinet-level administrators remain committed to moving forward as reflected by one's comments:

To not change is easier than to change... I have to psych myself up sometimes for these change meetings because you are going to have to clear the deck of idols you are holding on to. Whether it be your teaching load or things where you find your identity, you have to try to hold things loosely... Moving forward and accomplishing and sustaining our mission is the most important goal.

Participants throughout the university expressed this understanding that change can be hard, but needing to continually find ways to press forward.

A third challenge experienced during the sustaining change phase has been identifying and working through the details of change initiatives. In some cases, a decision about a new initiative can be made at the cabinet level with logistical issues needing to be resolved by managers or other staff. One administrator described this challenge:

When it's a big idea concept, that part is embraced. Then you get down into the nitty gritty of the operations, and how that affects the business model, billing, registration, and the classroom. If there's any resistance, that's where it comes out. But there doesn't ever seem to be resistance to the big idea. It is resistance to how that big idea is going to be fleshed out, and how the details are going to be worked out.

One staff manager explained how he provides leadership in these types of situations, "For the most part, we understand the culture of change. I talk with my staff all the time about how change isn't going away but only increase. We may as well get onboard and not be those obstacles." These comments reflected the commitment within the organization to determine solutions, even during the difficult periods of resolving logistics.

Program College Conclusion

The case study of Program College described the themes that emerged from the data analysis during each of the three stages in the change process at Program College: motivating, implementing, and sustaining change. The institution had been faced with a substantial crisis that was reflected in declining enrollment and low morale; in response,

administrative leadership worked with faculty to develop a new identity as an innovative leader in higher education. The adaptive change that has occurred during this timeframe has been energizing and challenging for administrators, faculty, and staff. Yet participants who were interviewed for this study reflected an underlying commitment to the institution, including a resolve to continue with the current path. Dr. Smith described his perception of faculty and staff:

There is a resolve. We do not like it. We wish we did not have to. But we know we have to change... There is a realization that to not change means you sit still and do not get anything done.

The environment at Program College promotes a sense that people are contributing to a larger mission, so it is worthwhile to work through challenges for the greater good. One staff member stated:

There's a bottom line that is unalterable and a sense that we deeply believe we share a common goal, bigger than any of our jobs. It has to do with loving people and why we're put here at all. That is a place you come back to when things get difficult. There's just an undergirding resolve to say, "Relationships and people matter."

Despite many challenges in recent years, administrators, faculty, and staff expressed excitement about the direction of the organization. One professor's comments captured this spirit:

This is a day of change, not just in schools, but everywhere. And there is a feeling that it is going to even accelerate.... Most of us are excited about change.

I am past retirement, but I have hung on because this is an exciting place right now. It is kind of fun to be a part of this adventure we are on here.

This professor's perspective represents one of the many participants who had elected to remain at Program College throughout a multi-year period of adaptive change and who continue to be invigorated by future possibilities. These employees who have remained at the institution are joined by new faculty and staff who learned about the innovative changes occurring and were excited to participate in new endeavors.

Technology University

Background

Traveling to Technology University includes driving through wide open spaces and passing numerous ranches to reach a relatively remote city. The area surrounding the university is primarily driven by agriculture, manufacturing, and regional health care, in addition to some recent technology development. Along with Technology University, two other private higher education institutions are located in the city, although both have encountered recent financial challenges. The surrounding area of Technology University is similar to that of Program College, in that people find the setting unlikely for an institution that has gained a reputation for innovative approaches to higher education. The criteria for selecting the sites included in this research were based on defining characteristics of the adaptive change model: willingness to challenge routines, developing new learning, incorporating broad involvement from people within the organization, and resolving difficult problems (Heifetz et al., 2009). Technology University was selected for this study due to implementing several adaptive changes over a sustained period of time, beginning with a technology initiative that provided the

foundation for future innovations. An overview of Program College's demographics, campus location, and recent presidential leadership are provided in the sections that follow.

Demographics. Technology University was founded early in the 20th century and developed over time into a comprehensive university with undergraduate and graduate offerings. As of Fall 2015, the institution employed 10 cabinet-level leaders, approximately 250 full-time faculty members, and 500 full-time staff. The institution enrolled more than 5,000 students in Fall 2015, over 80% of whom were enrolled in the undergraduate traditional program. The demographic patterns in terms of employees and students are representative of the period in which the pattern of adaptive change was initiated. However, the participants who were interviewed explained that the student population has changed dramatically in recent years, with a particular increase in ethnic diversity. This changing population has been a direct result of enrollment initiatives designed to expand the student population at Technology University. In addition, the institution has taken steps to expand delivery models with a goal of increasing enrollment growth in graduate programs. Several employees noted their perception that as a mid-sized institution, there have been available resources for innovative work without levels of bureaucracy that prohibit creativity.

Campus location. Technology University is located in a rural city of approximately 120,000 people that is 3 hours from a significant metropolis. This rural location contributes in important ways to the institutional environment. People at the university referred to the rural surroundings with a mixture of humility and pride. For some individuals, the university's achievement of national prominence for its innovative

use of technology has been surprising due to its rural location. Others described the region as providing a motivation and work ethic toward innovation because of a willingness to “pull up one’s boot straps” and get things done.

The campus has a collegial feel and offers an attractive setting marked by beautiful and well-kept buildings and grounds. Banners are present throughout the campus with messages communicating the institution’s placement in various publications, along with campus values, with a particular emphasis on innovation. Several signs on campus include written descriptions and visual images of the vision for the future at Technology University. A recent fundraising campaign featured the construction of several buildings and the reconfiguration of other spaces on campus. Some work toward these institutional goals has been completed, and construction currently underway contributes to a feeling that the institution is moving forward. The messages visible across campus reflect attention to incorporating innovation into the student experience. One noticeable message that is part of a lab reads, “Think, Make, Learn.” Another prominent sign posted at the entrance to the student center promoted start-up week. The new buildings and messages about students reflected dedicated space, resources, and attention to infusing innovation into the environment at Technology University. These promising indicators about innovation were affirmed during interviews conducted with personnel during my 1-week visit to the campus.

Presidential leadership. The events described in this case study occurred during the presidential terms of two people. Early activities were part of the tenure of Dr. Jones (pseudonym), a long-time president who had begun his career as a faculty member and was beloved for his pastoral nature. As Dr. Jones approached retirement, an internal

candidate with extensive experience at the institution, Dr. Williams (pseudonym), was selected as the next president. Dr. Williams's background at the university centered on areas of higher education finance, which was helpful preparation for the institution in navigating budgetary challenges that impacted many colleges and universities due to the national fiscal crisis beginning in 2008. This presidential transition represented a significant adjustment for faculty and staff because many employees had become accustomed to the personal care that seemed to emanate from Dr. Jones. For the remainder of this case study, the pseudonyms for these key figures are used to ensure anonymity and clarity.

The three phases of Technology University's transition to become an innovative leader in higher education are similar to the pattern of the previous case study. In both case studies, the description of environmental characteristics is segmented into three phases: (a) motivating change, (b) implementing change, and (c) sustaining change. Some themes were present during each of the three phases; other themes emerged or changed in prominence as the identity of the institution shifted over time. The Technology University case study begins with the development of an innovative idea to significantly alter the teaching and learning experience for faculty and students. Ultimately, the initiative raised the profile of the institution dramatically through various types of attention from media, businesses, and other colleges and universities. A professor said that the technology initiative "has been a great milestone in relation to branding the university in being an innovative institution." The first section describes motivating change during which the innovative idea, referred to as the technology initiative, was created and evaluated. The second section describes the phase of

implementing the technology initiative, which contributed to enhancing the identity of the institution. The third section describes how the institution has sustained an environment conducive to innovation, with the growth of a collective identity and demonstrated ability to implement successful change on an ongoing basis.

Motivating Change

During the mid-2000s, a small group of administrators, faculty, and staff at Technology University began considering a technological innovation that could radically impact the teaching and learning experience for faculty and students. The initial idea generation had started with one faculty member, who proposed the initiative to this group as well as executive leaders. Within a few months, the group evaluated possibilities and recommended to executive leaders that the institution should proceed with implementation of an initiative focused on applying technological tools to impact the learning experience. The articulation of this goal and the eventual successful implementation of a transformation vision was frequently described by participants as a defining period for the university.

The institutional dynamic during the motivating change phase at Technology University was one in which executive leaders created an environment that promoted innovation, providing the space for an individual faculty member to envision and pursue the technology initiative. In the years leading to the development of the technology initiative, steps had been taken by executive leaders to cultivate an innovative environment. Some of the strategies included focusing on building a strong fiscal status and endowment, emphasizing creative and innovative qualities during the hiring process of administrators and faculty, focusing on best practices, and enhancing professional

development opportunities throughout the institution. These approaches, several of which are addressed further herein, contributed significantly to an environment that cultivated the possibility of pursuing the technology initiative. This section about motivating change at Technology University describes the characteristics that prompted the idea of the technology university and led to the implementation of this “milestone event,” as described by many participants. The themes discussed in this section include hiring innovative people, developing a climate for innovation, ideas emerging from within the organization, understanding technology and its impacts, and the leadership group recognizing an opportunity. The first characteristic, hiring innovative people, helped cultivate the environment for the proposal of the technology initiative.

Hiring innovative people. During the years preceding the creation of the technology innovation, Technology University’s executive leadership had emphasized hiring administrators, faculty, and staff with capabilities for innovation and a willingness to change. Organizational leaders had previously devoted attention to strengthening the budget and endowment, and having reached a level of financial stability, were now establishing goals to see the institution move in a creative direction. Dr. Jones stated, “We became more purposeful with innovation.... I had some young, ambitious men and women who were really interested in pushing the envelope in a good sort of way.” The president also explained that university leaders began to provide training and encouragement to deans and department chairs when hiring new faculty. One of the communicated goals was to emphasize the hiring of faculty with high energy, new ideas, and a bent toward innovation. Dr. Jones explained, “We were able to obtain some key faculty members and staff people who have been in the lead of innovation, particularly in

the area of technology.” Participants explained that this focus on creativity and innovation during the hiring process laid the groundwork for future innovations, including the development of the technology initiative, because of an increasing number of creative individuals throughout the institution.

An additional step related to hiring and personnel development was the decision by executive leaders to launch a development center, which was primarily dedicated to faculty enhancing teaching skills. Dr. Jones stated:

It was almost exclusively dedicated to the professional development of faculty....

At the time there were not very many institutions, certainly private Christian institutions, that had an entire section dedicated to professional development.... It paid off tremendously because it laid the groundwork for our technological advances.

Several participants identified the crucial role of this center in providing a space and resource for skill development, but equally as important as a place to talk about new ideas and potential innovations. In addition to hiring people with creative capacities, Technology University began to intentionally craft a climate that was conducive to innovation.

Developing a climate for innovation. During the motivating change phase, the characteristic of intentionally developing a climate for innovation was evident because of decisions to lay the foundation for future innovative breakthroughs. Dr. Jones identified this period of his presidency as establishing a “trajectory” during which “a climate of innovation... began to fuse and take shape.” This climate for innovation was enhanced by (a) emphasizing flexibility, (b) taking advantage of the mid-sized nature of the

institution, (c) developing an experimental mindset, and (d) demonstrating a tolerance for failure.

Emphasizing flexibility. According to interview data provided by numerous participants, during this period of developing a climate for innovation, the executive leaders, faculty, and staff reflected a willingness to try new approaches and be responsive to input from external sources. For example, relationships were cultivated by institutional leaders with local and national businesses who had an interest in innovative approaches to higher education. As these relationships developed, the institution experienced some initial benefits by demonstrating a level of flexibility. Dr. Johnson explained, “Contrary to large public research institutions, we were flexible. We could turn on a dime, turn things around, and rapidly develop experiments. We found that big corporations liked that.” Some companies began to provide small grants to Technology University, forming the foundation for more significant partnerships in future years. Flexibility was also demonstrated by the faculty, particularly leaders within the humanities, who were actively involved in proposing the campus-wide technology initiative. Participants also described the “medium” size of the institution as a key factor for developing a climate for innovation.

Taking advantage of size. Several faculty and staff referenced the “medium” size of Technology University as enabling innovation because it allowed individuals to have access to executive leaders, even to the president. Individuals with creative ideas were able to rapidly present suggestions without having to navigate multiple organizational layers. This size and flatness of the organizational structure allowed new ideas to be fostered and developed quickly.

A second factor related to the size of the institution was adequate levels of resources for pursuing innovative ideas. Because of focused attention by institutional leaders to ensure stable finances and a growing endowment along with campus development, the institution had a level of financial margin for experimentation. Participants perceived the finances of the institution to be relatively strong compared to similar sized universities. At the same time, individuals recognized there were limits to financial resources, so while projects were supported, it was not with unending funds. This characteristic of taking advantage of the institution's size prompted an experimental mindset as part of the developing climate for innovation.

Experimental mindset. Executive leaders followed up on encouraging the hiring of innovative employees by promoting an openness to experiment with new approaches across the institution. It is important to note that the encouragement to experiment was fostered among faculty. Some departments began to try different methods for teaching courses, with many of the innovations prompted by workshops and seminars offered by the faculty development center. One professor described examples:

Professors were asking students to create PowerPoint assignments and things that were a little crazy at the time. Faculty members were teaching literature survey courses backward because they wanted to start with the moderns, and through the semester show the literature that influenced what we read today.

Although these examples from the early years of instilling innovative approaches may seem minor in retrospect, participants viewed the ongoing openness to experimentation as generating momentum for bigger ideas. One professor explained, "Without encouragement going back many years to try things out, fail, and experiment, we would

not have turned to some of the bigger experiments.” Participants described how continually trying new approaches and learning from those experiences cultivated an openness to larger projects. A corresponding factor that promoted an experimental mindset was an increasing tolerance for failure within the environment.

Tolerance for failure. In cultivating an environment of innovation and experimentation, numerous participants observed that it had been essential for the leaders and faculty to be able to experiment without worrying about repercussions for failure. Dr. Jones explained, “I gave them permission to fail and said the worst thing you could do is not try.” This emphasis from the president seemed to be particularly important in pursuing new approaches without a fear of failure. Participants described a process of increasing understanding throughout the institution that attempting new approaches was encouraged, and failure would not be viewed negatively. As these factors combined to develop a climate for innovation during the motivating change phase, ideas began to emerge from within the organization.

Ideas emerging from within the organization. Technology University’s work to cultivate an environment in which innovation was encouraged proved beneficial when the idea for the technology initiative was proposed by a professor in the English department. A staff member described the impetus for the initiative:

A faculty member saw something and started dreaming and envisioning about what this could look like. He called a couple of people together, went to senior administration, including our president, and said, “We need in on this. We need to be the first school doing this, little ol’ [Technology University].”

As the idea for the technology initiative was developed, other faculty members started to participate, along with teaching and learning experts and cabinet-level administrators. Yet Dr. Jones emphasized the uniqueness that a faculty member, and particularly an English professor, was responsible for proposing a teaching and learning initiative centered on technology. Dr. Jones said, “What I loved was... how cross disciplinary this project was. At the time, two of the leading creative people on our campus were English professors. Not engineering, IT, or business, but English of all things.” These comments were indicative of the perception of several participants that creative ideas could be proposed from any part of the institution. The following section explains how a broad understanding about technological advances contributed to a supportive response to this new idea.

Understanding technology and impacts. As institutional leaders were initially introduced to the proposal for the technology initiative during the motivating change phase, they demonstrated an awareness that technology was rapidly changing and would have a profound impact on society and higher education. Communication from executive leaders had contributed to this understanding through a focus on national trends and best practices in higher education. Additionally, the president had encouraged administrators to intentionally engage with professional organizations; he described the benefits of this emphasis:

Not only was I exposed to new ideas and ways of doing things, several of our senior staff and executives were also exposed. In their respective disciplines, they would have annual meetings and discuss how they’re doing this or that. We picked up a lot of good ideas. We also realized that we had an edge on many of

the institutions in certain areas. The technology [i.e., institutional capabilities] factor was one of them.

Thus, one contributor to the university's innovative spirit seemed to be related to the encouragement given by executive leaders to faculty and staff to increase their attention to best practices at regional and national institutions.

In addition, a small but representative committee comprised of faculty, staff, and administrators, had been evaluating and working on technology needs in relation to teaching and learning for some time leading up to this initiative. Technology University benefited from having organizational systems like this committee already in place to engage in further dialogue and research about the technology initiative. One administrator described this committee's role:

This is a group that does everything from approving requests for new computer labs to looking at new pieces of classroom software. Once a month there was a "forced gathering," but it didn't feel forced because you got to be friends with all the other folks. This was a really natural place for the conversation to organically happen about, "Are you reading all this stuff? That's kind of cool, isn't it?" "What if we did something?" As soon as we asked those questions, it was off to the races. A really important part was we didn't have to force dialogue; there were already mechanisms in place that felt very natural where innovation conversations could just naturally take place.

This structure of including various representatives in the conversation about innovative approaches helped center the focus on teaching and learning, rather than conveying that such ideas were simply new technological gimmicks. As the idea for the technology

initiative gained momentum, it was ultimately presented to executive leaders for evaluation.

Leaders responding to opportunity. Technology University's senior-level leadership demonstrated a high level of responsiveness to this new idea; they encouraged dialogue among involved faculty and staff and evaluated the potential benefits and necessary resources. Cabinet-level administrators decided to invest the expenses necessary to move forward and reached a decision to implement the initiative. A staff member explained:

The space our faculty live in is that they feel empowered to think and create big. We have leadership who believes and trusts in those ideas. For the technology initiative, our leadership said, "We're doing it. We're going to make it happen."

Choosing to proceed with the initiative designated a significant marker for the university in the pursuit of innovation. An administrator described the decision to proceed as: "We drew a line in the sand and said, 'We're going to do this.'" This bias toward action prompted Technology University to move to the next phase of implementing change.

This section has described the environmental characteristics of hiring innovative people, developing a climate for innovation, ideas emerging from within the organization, understanding technology and its impacts, and the leadership group recognizing an opportunity that was evident during the motivating change phase. The next section introduces the implementing change phase, during which the technology initiative was launched.

Implementing Change

Having discussed and evaluated a potentially disruptive approach to teaching and learning during the motivating change phase, executive leaders and involved faculty members pressed forward with implementation. This section focuses on the characteristics that were evident during the implementing change phase as the technology initiative was launched. There was a range of responses from the community, including early adopters, middle adopters, and others who resisted this new initiative, as described by Dr. Smith:

We had champions that popped up, but we also had very different levels of embrace from various faculty members. Some sat in silence and didn't know what to do. Others were right at the heart of reinventing how they went about teaching their courses.

The examination of the implementing change phase centers on the ways administrators and other change leaders worked to build on the support of early adopters and increase participation by middle adopters in the technology initiative. The environmental characteristics evident during the implementing change phase discussed in the following sections include connecting the project to the institution's teaching mission, imagining possibilities, seeing others make changes, experimentation and results, and encouraging faculty buy-in. The first characteristic was a demonstrable connection to the institution's teaching mission.

Connection to teaching mission. As administrators and involved faculty members began to communicate about this change initiative across the broader institution, there was a consistent focus on mission; for Technology University, that

emphasis was expressed through the impacts on teaching and learning. Because the concept being presented was new and had not been attempted at other universities, it was a challenge to gain broad “buy-in and support” initially. The communication by executive leaders to faculty during this phase centered on the missional element. One administrator described the university’s commitment to educating students well with the introduction of innovative approaches designed to tap the potential of newer technological approaches:

They kept saying over and over again, this is an initiative to try new ways that could improve the learning of our students. We’re not saying this is the future of education, but we are going to start doing things that take us forward and see how we can be better at educating our students. This is the first major one that we’re going to undertake... and if it doesn’t work, we’ll scrap that and we’ll try something else. The goal is, how do we improve the educational experience of our students?

Participants noted that the impetus for the initiative and the ongoing communication related to the project consistently centered on this missional element and strengthening the educational commitment of the university in specific. This approach to communicating about the initiative ensured changes could be made in the future since the focus remained on mission rather than technology.

The ongoing involvement of several professors who were a driving force with the technology initiative and maintained significant influence helped demonstrate the institution’s commitment to the missional element of this project. One professor explained the importance of their leadership in the change process:

A lot of the decision makers you needed at key moments, for what was going to be a pretty expensive program, were in the room. They didn't all need to know how it was going to work or why it was pedagogically feasible, but it was driven by people asking questions about teaching and learning.

Professors were able to bring their expertise to the implementation phase and raise issues that may have otherwise not been included.

The administrative leadership of the institution expressed full support for the mission-centered component of the initiative. Dr. Williams explained:

The idea sparked from evaluating the changing nature of education in the digital age, both the challenges and opportunities that were coming down the pike... We believed that this would be a productive and insightful initiative that would help us enhance our focus on innovative learning in a digital age.

Centering the technology initiative on enhancing the teaching and learning experience for faculty and students encouraged more faculty to imagine new possibilities.

Imagining possibilities. As the technology initiative continued through the implementing change phase, faculty and administrators quickly learned that a disruption could initiate more fear than excitement for many people. One administrator who worked on this initiative described himself as an “early adopter” and recognized his excitement about attempting a new approach in higher education. However, he explained how his passion differed from the concerns of many people:

It is so exciting and invigorating, the notion of change in general, and the idea that this one initiative could revolutionize education. We got really excited and motivated. What we learned, though, and finally came to realize is that's not

exciting to most people. That scares the hell out of most people. People feel like, “I just want to get my grades done. I don’t want to change education. I need to go teach my class and that’s all I want to do.”

During the implementing change phase, individuals involved in leading the initiative attempted to emphasize the possibilities of the project to allay people’s concerns and doubts.

A significant tool that helped people envision how the technology initiative could enhance teaching and learning was creating a video that illustrated visually how the faculty and student experience could look. Several participants found this video to be helpful with imagining possibilities “because a lot of people couldn’t see it for themselves.” One administrator described how the use of this video helped imagination to overcome fear:

The little film showed people, “All we’re talking about is these examples... wouldn’t it be neat if you could do these things?” It let people glimpse a realistic image, put their mind there, engage some form to this notion of radical change, and realize it’s not that scary.

Ironically, the initial idea for a video was an off-hand suggestion in a meeting, but it proved to be one of the most effective ways for people to visualize potential applications of this initiative. This tool was helpful in imaging a new approach until change leaders began implementing the initiative.

Seeing others make changes. Although some faculty engaged immediately with the technology initiative, others were more hesitant and wanted to see results from the project. One professor explained his hesitation early in the process:

At first, I was very skeptical of the initiative. It actually took me a year or so to fully subscribe to what had been put in motion.... My skepticism was mostly from waiting to see how that could actually affect our teaching....

Some participants described how witnessing colleagues making changes as part of this initiative had been a powerful motivator for others to experiment with classroom approaches. One professor stated:

When I first heard faculty and colleagues talking about the technology initiative, I decided to wait and see how it goes. But over time I changed my position to think... this can be interesting. I started engaging and paying more attention to what they were trying to do. It was beginning to make a lot more sense to me.

After that, I was really a subscriber to the idea that this can benefit our classes and our institution.

The likelihood of success for the implementing change phase was greatly enhanced by having faculty involved from the beginning to demonstrate new approaches and possibilities to colleagues. Leaders at Technology University intentionally fostered experimentation with the technology initiative as another strategy for encouraging involvement from middle adopters.

Experimentation and results. Devoting resources in preparation for the implementation of the technology initiative to allow experimentation in advance was one way the university leadership demonstrated commitment to the initiative and their desire to offer a successful experience for students and faculty. Faculty had the option to apply for funds as part of the project that could be devoted to preparation for the initiative's launch. Several participants identified this opportunity as an important step by

Technology University to encourage faculty members to become early or middle adopters.

The professors who were willing to experiment became models to other faculty members for how this initiative could work. Dr. Williams explained that the experimenters typically already had a propensity for attempting new approaches:

The real champions of this were the people who crafted the vision in the first place or were in roles where they already demonstrated an interest in being innovative and doing so in the context of changing the educational delivery model. These were folks who had roles in the faculty development center, for example. These were people who, by proximity of their existing positions, were thinking more about, “How can we enhance the way we teach and how students learn?”

The faculty development center provided a key location for faculty to learn about the initiative and ways professors were experimenting with techniques. The center regularly offered optional training and development sessions, which allowed professors to make choices about the extent of their involvement. These activities generated interest among faculty members in adopting some of the methods that were part of the technology initiative. One professor described how his teaching approach had changed due to his participation in these discussions:

What I started becoming interested in was... implementation of blogs in the curriculum, which has been one of the greatest game-changers.... It expanded the conversations happening in class to outside of the class, as I asked students to contribute to the discussions.... Now their contributions to class became more

evident through commenting and adding posts to the blog.... It's really been a fascinating experience.

These remarks capture the sense many professors had begun to experiment with new methods due to the technology initiative. As the implementing change phase continued and experimentation was demonstrated, executive leaders sought to encourage faculty buy-in and thus involve more professors with the initiative.

Encouraging faculty buy-in. During the motivating change phase, the original impetus for the technology initiative idea started with a faculty member. The implementing change phase necessitated executive leadership supporting the project and providing resources. In the attempt to expand the technology initiative, cabinet-level leaders cultivated an environment in which faculty were encouraged to buy-in. Although the technology initiative was a campus-wide effort and involvement was encouraged, professors were not required to participate. From the perspective of a staff member, the high level of faculty participation reflected overall support. She stated:

Academics really embraced it. There always are going to be pockets of the faculty and places where they choose not to use it. They feel that their educational experience cannot be enhanced by this initiative. I think that is innovative by telling that professor, "That's fine. Keep doing your thing that you're doing well. You don't have to adapt to this."

Several participants emphasized the importance of giving professors the freedom to participate with the technology initiative at their own pace or not at all during the implementing change phase.

As the initiative became more embedded within the organization, the positive experiences of early and middle adopters developed a foundation for future innovative work. One administrator explained:

We had been trying to determine new modalities to educate the traditional undergraduate student in a residential setting, to see what the impact is. The technology initiative spurred ideas. It created a climate of people asking, what if we did this? I don't think we're where we're at today if that first initiative was not based upon ways we can extend the classroom and learning.

The previous sections have provided an overview of the environmental characteristics that contributed to the adaptive change process moving from the motivating change phase through the implementing change phase. During the implementing change phase, the following characteristics were evident: connecting the project to the institution's teaching mission, imagining possibilities, demonstrating experimentation and results, seeing others make changes, experimentation and results, and encouraging faculty buy-in. The next section describes how Technology University has sustained an environment that is conducive to change.

Sustaining Change

Following the successful implementing change phase at Technology University, various innovations have been developed and expanded in the years since the technology initiative was launched. Participants described the experiences with the technology initiative as a milestone event that catalyzed further innovation. During this research, evidence of positive change efforts was identified related to academic programs, delivery models, teaching and learning, campus spaces, student life, student services, and

enrollment. Several initiatives necessitated involvement from various departments throughout the university for successful adaptation.

In relation to the sustaining change phase, participants described Technology University as having an “innovative culture” that cultivates, promotes, and allows innovation. Dr. Williams stated:

We tend to have a community here that is interested in discussing innovation and change.... This is a culture where it has become one of the things that is comfortable, expected, and part of our ethos to talk about change and innovation as part of what we do.

A common descriptor was that innovation has become part of the “DNA” at the institution, as one administrator explained: “There’s a part of our university that’s always had an element of creativity and innovation and doing things differently.... We’ve always been in the higher end of that capacity for change. That’s within the DNA of the university.” This section of the case study focuses on the sustaining change phase at Technology University by describing the following environmental characteristics: organizational identity, increasingly change-oriented, permission to fail, evaluating and anticipating the context for higher education, collaboration, intentional communication, designated resources and structures, and challenges with implementing and timing change.

Organizational identity. The people of Technology University have developed an identity of the institution as being an innovative leader. Dr. Williams pointed to the technology initiative which “highlighted us nationally, even internationally” and became a primary contributor to this broad belief of becoming an innovative institution. He

explained those experiences “began the trajectory of Technology University as an innovative institution and caused us to start to believe that we were. One thing leads to another. This is a culture, at some level, that believes we’re capable of doing that.” The concept of being able to compete at the highest level was not accepted immediately by everyone. Over time, the confidence of people grew to the extent that employees recognized the institution’s innovative contributions. One administrator explained:

The university community now believes we really are a global player. We have thoughts and contributions that speak to the academy on a national and international level, that we can do things in a little region that really are impactful. It makes me nervous and uncomfortable even to say, but we deserve a place on the podium.

This section further details the concept of an organizational identity by exploring Technology University’s (a) development as an innovative leader, (b) the institution’s collective story, and (c) how this identity prompts action, along with broader impacts. Each of these characteristics is described more fully in the sections that follow.

Innovative leader. During the time in which the technology initiative was developed and launched, media outlets, business leaders, and higher education administrators and faculty began to perceive Technology University as a leader in the areas of innovation and technology. Accordingly, representatives from the institution were frequently invited to speak at events and other universities about the technology initiative. These experiences laid the groundwork for future relationships and opportunities that may not have occurred otherwise. One academic dean said that the technology initiative “put us on the map and part of a lot of different conversations that

we have not been in before” and described that heightened visibility as “a win” for the institution.

As the profile of the institution increased dramatically, participants noted a higher level of interest among potential faculty and staff to work at Technology University. One of the institution’s academic deans stated:

Much like success begets success if you have a good basketball or football program, it makes success easier to occur in higher education. Once you have a success or two, it makes it easier to attract folks who are interested in those kinds of projects.

People at all levels commented on an increasing caliber of faculty and cabinet-level leaders who have come to work at the institution.

Participants commented that despite the fact that some of the objectives for the technology initiative had not been entirely achieved, the effort itself and the successes experienced had created a perception of being an innovative institution. Over time, the initiative was adjusted and eventually discontinued. Reasons for these transitions included difficulty in keeping pace with technological advances, key personnel leaving the institution, and an evaluation on the impact on student learning. A staff member explained this evaluation process:

Faculty started polling and doing focus groups of students... We started seeing and hearing feedback. I give our university leaders a lot of credit for stopping what has been a successful initiative and saying, “Wait, we have to change again. There’s a new shift that has to happen because technology is different now. It

happened across the industry, regardless of higher education.” The initiative was a good thing, but we didn’t have to stay married to it.

Despite these changes to the initial technology initiative and its eventual discontinuation, a new institutional identity was developed out of the experiences.

Even people who viewed the technology initiative as having minimal benefits academically recognized the branding boon from being on the forefront of a technological approach designed to enhance teaching and learning that had gained national attention. An academic dean explained:

The technology initiative got a lot of press because it was the first one. That was successful, not because the initiative was necessarily successful, but because we got millions of dollars of free advertising. If you’re the first, you pop up in magazines, websites, and publications.... Was that successful in terms of the actual intent of it? Probably not. Was it successful in terms of more advertising than we could’ve possibly bought? Yes. That may have opened some eyes to the positive side to being out in front of the curve that isn’t necessarily quantifiable at the start.

This understanding of benefits for being an institutional leader in the use of technological innovation has helped gain acceptance for subsequent new programming initiatives. Additionally, the organizational identity as an innovative leader has coalesced into a collective story during the sustaining change phase.

Collective story. Participants described the organizational identity during the sustaining change phase as a powerful story or narrative that was birthed from the technology initiative. Dr. Williams stated, “We’ve gained a reputation as an innovative

institution. Sometimes I think that's well deserved, other times I don't. But when you gain a reputation like that, it's a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, and you end up living into that." The pioneering adoption of a technological innovation designed to enhance student learning framed the way people perceived the institution, even during times when that innovative spirit was not fully demonstrated.

Several participants – both administrative and faculty – identified messaging from administrative leaders as being key to creating and maintaining the collective story of the institution's innovative capabilities. This messaging included intentional efforts to brand the institution as innovative, contributing to a collective belief within the culture. An administrator explained, "Once it becomes a brand name... one of our three brand words is innovative, then the rest of the culture starts to think... 'We are innovative.'" President Williams was identified by administrators, faculty, and staff as having a significant part in defining and maintaining the institution's collective story; he explained his role in communicating this idea widely:

We say we are innovative. I say it all the time... it's in all our rhetoric. Right or wrong... whether you really are or not, over time you become that. That pervasive inclusion of the rhetoric and language is almost a self-fulfilling process. That's bigger than anything else we've done. We had enough rationale to do it. It wasn't just people saying, "You're crazy. Why would you even say that?" We had enough to point toward that we started doing it, and we never stopped. By a factor of 10, the most significant driver of being innovative is the self-fulfilling prophecy. We say we are all the time.

Even people who might have initially questioned some of the rhetoric used by the president about Technology University have recognized the benefits for this type of approach. An academic administrator explained:

Our president is an interesting character in the sense that he'll say things about our premier status which sound like they came off a commercial or a cereal box. But he may just be savvy enough to know that the president's role is to be a standard bearer and disseminate the story of the university, at least at the aspirational level.... We believe the story, but we're not naïve. There's a sense that we can hang with the big boys. And the fact is we have enough instances where we are hanging with the big boys and pushing out ahead of them to where we have reason to believe there's something to that story.

It is important to note that participants explained these beliefs and stories are not just ideals but deep values that prompt action.

Prompting action. Crafting an organizational identity, and specifically a story, as an innovative institution has contributed to numerous strategic actions at Technology University during the sustaining change phase. An academic administrator described the relationship between the collective story and action:

We have myths about ourselves that we believe. A story is told here that we do things as well as, if not better, than anybody else which, at a certain level, is a bunch of BS. But that story is told, and enough people believe that it could be the case; they act like it.

The institutional story, and the messaging that goes along with it, particularly impacts the way people generate, respond to, and implement ideas. Dr. Williams stated, "Because

[that identity is] out there in the rhetoric, it naturally leads to the opportunity to consider actually implementing change, because you're at least open to the idea of it. It's part of the ethos to be about the conversation." Participants explained that the collective identity and story have created a culture and narrative of which people want to be part and support.

Building upon that institutional identity. During the sustaining change phase, employees have looked for ways to express the value of innovation. One professor, who oversees a lab participants often mentioned as doing innovative work, described how he initially questioned the institution's message but eventually developed an innovative program on his own:

Because the institution is known for being innovative and promotes innovation as core to our philosophy.... I used to ask what makes us innovative? But this lab has provided a path to innovation through creativity and problem solving, immersive and experiential learning.... The conversations in design... are not just aesthetic in form, but a methodology that helps us identify problems and brainstorm solutions, create prototypes, tests, rate, and see if it works. A venue like this lab and other labs on campus can provide that path for innovation.

Several participants noted they had observed an increasing number of initiatives like this surfacing from various parts of the institution. The organizational identity of Technology University, which is evident in the characteristics of the belief of being an innovative leader, a collective story, prompting action, and building upon the institutional identity, is also demonstrated in broader impacts.

Broader impacts. Creating and maintaining the identity of an innovative institution has had pragmatic benefits during the sustaining change phase by assisting in the development of external relationships with organizations, leading to donations and partnerships. A professor stated:

Administrators realized the reputation and brand value that the institution was developing, and that it was something to grow. When administrators go to a company asking for dollars that will make a project happen, it is parlaying perception. You can debate whether that perception was 100% or 50% real, but the donations and partnerships are 100% real. Our ability to build future pockets of innovation and experimentation on top of national, local, and corporate perception and relationships is impressive.

As the institution's success and reputation has expanded, there have been increasing experiences of business leaders expressing an interest, and even excitement, to partner with Technology University. A professor explained:

The work we're doing now with another company, it's not even our program, but the company is in conversation with us. Some of their executives remember when they first heard about the university through that technology initiative. Walking into the room and hearing them be effusive and really excited that we are going to join them in this new project is funny.

Participants described how the institution has been able to "leverage brand value" to build multiple projects that follow each other, due to these types of partnerships.

For many people, the value of innovative work at Technology University extends beyond institutional reputation or practical benefits. One academic administrator

commented on previous experiences at other institutions when leaders have focused on institutional pride and accomplishments. He clarified that although the leadership of Technology University highlights accomplishments, employees have maintained a missional emphasis:

The sense of being premier is not for the sake of showing ourselves off. It's for affecting change in the world. In the lab [perceived as a place of innovation on campus], to use an example, there's a strong sense of social entrepreneurship.... It was an effort to try to change student lives and their ability to change our society. We're currently involved in another innovative project to create a research and design lab. Similarly, the idea is how can our students better communicate their research, their ideas, so that the world can hear it and be impacted by it? That is a big deal here; the Christian underpinning of impacting the globe is important.

Ultimately, participants in this study viewed Technology University as having cultivated a new organizational identity during the sustaining change phase, especially by parlaying the successes from the technology initiative. Dr. Williams stated, "The technology initiative caused us to have some institutional confidence that we can be innovative.... We thought, 'We can do this.'"

Increasingly change-oriented. During the sustaining change phase at Technology University, the data reflected an increasing orientation toward change, which developed as a result of the technology initiative. An administrator explained:

There's a willing support from leadership and the campus community to try and do things... Because of the technology initiative, there is now a broader campus

conversation about innovation and its pros, cons, and challenges. It became part of our conscious ethos more than it had been in the past.

Despite the challenges of the technology initiative, faculty increasingly became open to thinking about change and innovation. One professor explained:

The technology initiative was flawed, but it was really good... It moved some things along quickly that needed to be moved along. To have jumped into those conversations early on, in an all-in way, to figure out what we can learn from this, has been really useful. Even if that doesn't look anything like we thought it was going to... it sparked some really good thoughts about how we deliver content and what kinds of things we need to be doing in our classes.

It was evident from the data that several factors contributed to the increasing change-orientation at Technology University, including the following: frequency of change initiatives, allowing ideas to “bubble up,” engaging with ideas, responsiveness to administratively driven change, openness to possibilities, and emphasizing continual improvement.

Frequency of change initiatives. During the sustaining change phase, the number and pace of change projects has increased in various parts of the university. Participants noted that in recent years, more people have participated in changes, and fewer people have resisted new approaches. One administrator commented on how increasing the frequency of initiatives contributed to a higher level of change-orientation within the environment: “The more you change, the more people get used to it. That has created more of a culture that change is okay because of recognizing the necessity for it.” The challenges as part of implementing the original technology initiative have not been as

evident during recent years. An administrator explained how subsequent changes have been implemented with fewer roadblocks:

It can be hard if you're in a culture that is very staid and does not want to make changes. The hardest change is the first one, but it gets a little easier after that. That's where we are today. Not that we weren't changing, we've always had a little bit of that piece to us. But given all that's happened within the last few years, people have gotten more used to it.

Administrators have contributed to an environment in which the frequency of change initiatives can increase through an ongoing commitment to hiring policies and practices that emphasize an openness to change. One manager stated, "For the most part, we have hired people who are not afraid to change... We've been pretty intentional about hiring people who are not afraid to... break this and start over." This focus on hiring practices has allowed for increasing the number of change initiatives and contributed to the generation of new ideas.

Ideas bubbling up. The starting place for change initiatives at Technology University often includes administrative leaders, but the environment is equally open for faculty and staff to present ideas. Participants explained that about half of the projects in recent years initiated from executive leaders, while the other half originated from faculty or staff. Employees described the culture as one in which ideas can be presented and developed, with the best initiatives "bubbling up" to the administrative level. An academic administrator explained the feeling that ideas are evaluated based on their merit:

Anyone who has a good idea has a shot. You have to sell it but you can be staff, faculty, or an administrator. If you have a good idea, you'll get a hearing... it will make it up the chain... good ideas win.

Participants described an appreciation for executive leaders consistently demonstrating an openness to listen and evaluate ideas presented from any part of the institution. A senior-level administrator explained his approach when new ideas are presented:

Some of innovation is looking where we need to be, and some is being willing to listen to others as they come up with ideas. I wouldn't pretend that one day I said, "We need this partnership. Or how about a lab?" Neither one of those were my ideas. I'd love to claim them, but they weren't. Being able to listen to good ideas and not dismiss it immediately is important... It's not getting so locked into the task at hand that we can't think about something other than what's right in front of us.

Although having an innovative culture is evident throughout the university, some individuals and departments have gained a reputation for being particularly creative. An administrator explained, "Innovation largely bubbles up from the bottom [rather] than from the top down in terms of the way that it happens. We have different pockets of that around campus, and some people think that way and some people don't." Another administrator explained that when a challenge or problem is identified, some people are specifically tapped "and then those solutions kind of bubble up." Individuals perceived as innovative and problem solvers are viewed as having an ability to view challenges in a different way and thus imagine new solutions. One administrator said, "At the heart of

change, beyond what could and should be, is asking the question why.” Participants described these innovative leaders as continually being willing to ask about the reason or purpose behind a program or process. In addition to higher frequency of change initiatives and ideas bubbling up within the environment, the increasing change-orientation of Technology University is reflected in a broad engagement with ideas.

Engaging with ideas. Participants explained a common experience in which new ideas could be presented and discussed in a manner that encourages dialogue and evaluation. Participants from across campus described a general excitement for engaging ideas and considering innovative possibilities, supported by an environment that promotes fresh thinking. The comments of one professor summarized this approach: “This is a place that welcomes innovation, where people like to be creative and think about new ways of doing things.... There’s a very creative focus, a focus on discovery, a focus on innovation.” Professors who have ideas about pedagogical experiments have found favorable responses to ideas, as illustrated by a professor who received support from her dean when making a case for a “crazy” idea and its benefits. Frequently, the types of responses from academic leadership include trying to identify department funds, working with the faculty development center, or presenting proposals to the provost’s office to “cobble together” the resources to support an innovative approach.

The openness to dialoguing about ideas includes projects facilitated and directed by staff members. One staff member described his involvement with a recent change initiative:

At an initial meeting we said, “Let’s just talk about this issue. Does everybody agree that we ought to figure out something different to do about this?” From

there, it's one of the things about us as an institution... that lack of fear of change.

If you're not scared of change, throwing out and generating ideas is not hard.

That's the easy part. Implementation is the hard part. We are never short of ideas around here. Some of that stems from we're not afraid to break things.

Participants described the environment as one where people can ask "what if" types of questions, and the response is dialogue, asking questions, and evaluation rather than preference being given to the status quo.

People in leadership positions contribute to this engagement with ideas by fostering open discussion. Faculty and staff feel they have the opportunity to imagine new possibilities, including approaches not practiced at other institutions. A staff director described his experience with a recent initiative:

Most change projects ultimately come down to what you have the will to do. The lead administrator told us early on, he had the will to go as far with this as we wanted to go.... That was a big driver. You've taken the parameters off so let's figure out what to do.... Then it becomes pretty easy to think about... what are we going to do? The idea to completely break [the previous approach] felt like the right way to go because we had tried to make minor adjustments historically, and none of those had been successful.

A cabinet-level administrator described his enthusiasm for hearing creative ideas:

"Anytime someone approaches me saying, 'I have an idea. I want to run a test in the market,' I get excited and say, 'Let's do it.'" This continual willingness to consider ideas contributes to an environment in which employees feel comfortable bringing creative suggestions forward.

This environmental characteristics of engaging with ideas has proven to be an attraction in recruiting staff and faculty to work at Technology University. An academic dean stated:

If an idea is tossed out, people don't say, "We tried that before" or "we would never do that." All those kinds of things just aren't said... It's like, "We'll try again. How could we do it differently? What have you heard? What might be different now?" There's a whole lot of openness to [new ideas] and a very inquisitive environment that would say, "Tell me what you mean by that" rather than just shutting it down immediately. Once you do that for a little bit, then you attract some people who are interested, and it becomes self-perpetuating. If folks are attracted, they say, "I'd like to go there, because they're willing to try some things."

Several participants described their perception that potential faculty and staff members are attracted to the "entrepreneurial" attitude encouraged within the institution. As Technology University reflects an environmental characteristic of engaging ideas, faculty and staff demonstrated a responsiveness to increasing administrative-driven change.

Responsiveness to increasing administrative-driven change. In addition to an environment in which innovative approaches are encouraged to "bubble up" from faculty and staff, participants described a reciprocity in which employees are responsive to initiatives presented by administrative leaders. Executive leaders have increasingly proposed and directed change initiatives during recent years. An administrator described the drivers of many change initiatives at the institution as "the future casting, forecasting, and foresight of a few individuals that cast the vision and give the campus a common

language and vocabulary to talk about issues and ideas.” When these proposals are presented, there is adequate trust among the community to respond to data and trends.

One academic administrator stated:

People’s willingness to trust leadership and turn on a dime when there’s good data and ideas, and not do things the same way just because we’ve always done them, is remarkable. There is nothing that we’re doing here, with maybe some exceptions around our Christian identity, which we wouldn’t jettison if we found that there was a better way to do it. I’ve seen that time and time again. It drives you mad sometimes, but everything’s on the table. That’s a key factor that’s in the culture.

Participants explained that the move toward more administratively driven change represents a new approach but also increasing trust among faculty for direction provided by executive leaders.

Several participants identified a recent administratively-led initiative to enhance the customer service provided to students as an example of how leaders across campus accepted administrative initiatives. Institutional leaders had recognized a level of service that was uneven in a certain area, leading to discontent among students and families. A cabinet-level administrator gathered a team to begin working on potential solutions. He explained his proposed approach at an initial meeting, providing the parameters for the initiative to solve a problem, but opening up possibilities based on ideas that could be generated from the group. This administrator said, “Part of change is examining what should be and what could be. That’s a big part of change is... you know what is, but then that discussion of could it be better? Should it be different?” Ultimately, this group of

leaders implemented a creative approach to restructuring services and workflows.

Although the process included some employment transitions, most employees accepted the adjustments as an opportunity to improve the student experience. The environmental characteristic of an increasing change-orientation at Technology University during the sustaining change phase has been described as including higher frequency of change initiatives, ideas bubbling up within the environment, engagement with ideas, and a responsiveness to administratively-driven change. An additional element of this increasing change-orientation is an openness to possibilities.

Open to possibilities. The data for this study reflected a shared perspective among employees of being intrigued with possibilities and open to trying something new. A common motivation among employees that emerged as part of the sustaining innovation phase was consideration of how education could be done differently and how the experience could look for students, faculty, staff, and administrators. One administrator specifically pointed to the “hill country” location of the campus “where anything can happen” as contributing to this willingness to imagine and dream about new approaches. His comments that “we’ll try anything” were shared by numerous participants who described an openness to creative approaches.

When considering new initiatives, there was a general recognition that not all factors could be identified, thus necessitating an element of risk. A professor explained:

When we’re thinking about innovation, we don’t have a set standard of “I can prove that it’s going to do this.” And it may completely flop. But people are willing to take that risk, and willing to say, “Here’s what I think could happen.”

Participants expressed an understanding that proposals for innovation or change need to be thoughtful and well researched, but also that space was available to see what could happen.

This openness to proceed with initiatives and see “what might happen” was illustrated by an administrator who explained:

Part of innovation is it is not predetermining. You have to calculate your most likely areas of success but not predetermine all areas of success. Part of the lab concept [a project identified as innovative by participants] was giving all students access. Some of that same idea was here in this project to say, “What happens if you give all students access to all of these programs?” We know what’ll happen in some programs, but what might happen in other majors? Or what products and projects might emanate because a student can now have access to this in a way that's pretty unique?

An academic administrator similarly described this approach, “We try to control what we can control, affect what we can affect, and let the rest of the chips fall where they may.” This understanding was widespread among participants, reflecting a comfort with calculated risk.

Faculty expressed a willingness to participate in experimental efforts and take chances on what might happen with new efforts. One professor said:

We don’t really know what students having access to these new programs will do. Some of these are bets. We don’t know what the results of those bets are going to be. Some of them are going to come back, and others are not going to pay off.

A key element for the faculty's openness to possibilities is the support structure in place through the faculty development center as well as collegial relationships that have been cultivated. A professor stated, "Previous projects needn't have gone as well as they did, but you had faculty supporting faculty in these kinds of creative relationships."

Even people who did not view themselves as change leaders reported having embraced the concept of exploring innovative ideas related to higher education. An academic administrator explained:

I fall more comfortably in a managing rather than changing paradigm. But I feel like it is incredibly important, at this point in higher education's existence, to change and adopt what we're doing. I think about that in terms of this sort of agrarian calendar that we follow. Why do we need falls and springs? Why don't we go to a different model? What about truly hybrid courses that make the most of face-to-face and an online component?

Engaging with these types of questions foster an environment for faculty to propose and suggest new approaches that address some of the issues facing Technology University specifically, and higher education more broadly.

Some individuals who were interviewed expressed a desire for change to occur at a quicker pace. However, discussions with colleagues at other institutions served as a reminder of the innovative culture already in place, as one professor explained:

When I talk to friends at other universities or they come to visit, I may have a certain restlessness or desire that I wish we were moving further and faster.... But they're walking in and saying, "You're nuts! We don't have what you do." These are folks from prominent schools we work with.... There are things we take for

granted and the openness to change, the desire for innovation is never going to be 100% through the institution. Human nature doesn't work like that, but the openness to change and conversations here is fairly unique.

Participants also mentioned comparisons to other higher education institutions they had made through professional connections that served as reminders of how atypical the innovative culture of Technology University was. As part of the increasing change-orientation during the sustaining change phase, an emphasis on continual improvement was identified.

Continual improvement. Institutional leaders at Technology University have cultivated a continual drive to improve on current practices and approaches. One administrator described the institutional ethos: "We're always in change, something new we're looking at, something we should be evaluating, whether we should keep doing it." People viewed the technology initiative as having provided the foundation for developing characteristics of willingness within the organization to attempt new approaches, make adjustments, and apply learnings to future endeavors. One manager stated:

The technology initiative is a really great example of why I'm proud of where I work. When we see something not working, we feel empowered to pause, think, and change.... It was great in its early years, and it launched us ahead in so many ways of how we thought about teaching in the classroom and how to use technology.

Several participants described learning and improvements that have occurred at the institution as a subsequent outgrowth of the technology initiative.

Participants view the institution as having a culture that emphasizes experimentation with a continual goal of improvement. An administrator explained, “We look for ways to change if it makes sense and it’s important.” Another cabinet-level administrator stated:

Part of the DNA of this place is to try new things. Especially here in my office, we probably have an addiction to testing. Sometimes that’s a healthy addiction, sometimes it’s not, but we’re running multiple tests every year to try to see what is working.... Let’s create change based upon what is not working, and if something is working... fine tune it or keep it as is. There’s been a culture here of wanting to try things and improve.

The emphasis on continual improvement has allowed ongoing evaluation and adjustment of initiatives. One manager explained that his department decided to try a new approach despite having “no idea” of whether it would work. However, after initial success, modifications have been made during 2 successive years to increase the effectiveness of this new approach. The first environmental characteristics explored during the sustaining change phase at Technology University have been an evolving organizational identity and increasing change-orientation. The next section describes the characteristic of a permission to fail.

Permission to fail. It was evident within the organizational environment of Technology University that employees perceived a permission to try new approaches without being constrained by possible failure. One administrator spoke about how he had observed a “spirit of experimentation and leaders being extremely careful about penalizing people for trying. It’s not a blank check. You’ve got to stay within the

bounds of reason, but encourage risk taking.” Participants commented on their recognition that advance planning and research was necessary and helpful but also that trying new approaches was necessary to learn what might work. The comments of an administrator reflected the perspective of other participants regarding the paradoxical idea of risking failure without unnecessary gambles:

We don't always know what's going to work or not. If you have the fear that if you fail, you're going to lose your job, then you're not going to be willing to take risks. There's a fine line between being a gambler and taking risk. If I were to gamble, I would be at risk of losing my job. But if we are able to think through things methodically... why we're taking this risk, limiting the risk by only running a test or a pilot, or some reason to believe an area needs a complete overhaul, then people will be understanding.

This section further describes this characteristic of a permission fail by focusing on a willingness to experiment and learning from failure.

Willingness to experiment. The permission to fail that has been communicated by administrative and faculty leaders at Technology University has cultivated an openness among individuals and departments to attempt and support experimental efforts. Administrators contribute to this institutional characteristic by acknowledging, incentivizing, and rewarding creativity and innovation. Incentives such as stipends and release time have been made available to encourage innovative efforts or in support of people interested in experimentation. One academic administrator explained that executive leaders have nurtured an openness for people to think “radically different” in comparison to current approaches. He perceived “an administrative appreciation of

creative and unusual solutions that promote rapid prototyping and delivery better than most anything else.” These administrative efforts have catalyzed people within the institution to consider possibilities for “reinventing” the university.

Participants particularly noted the unique level of willingness to experiment among faculty. One professor explained, “There’s been a freedom in this space, a curious exploration, that allows you to tackle the problem first, but also surrounded by people that really knew the tools and what they might be capable of.” The collective experience with the technology initiative fostered an increased level of comfort for people to attempt new educational approaches. One academic dean said that the technology initiative “transformed our faculty’s understanding of what classroom experiences should be like.” Several participants noted the impact of the technology initiative on the various methods professors were subsequently willing to try. The experience contributed to an environment in which an increasing number professors evaluate their own teaching methods. One professor said:

We now have more faculty in that middle adopters group who are interested and want to learn how to use technology, who are seeing it as an imperative because students are digital natives.... There’s fewer people saying, “I’m not doing any of that.” That’s probably a function of time, development, and technology. People realize this is happening.

Employees at Technology University are developing emerging skills related to experimentation, including design methodology, testing, and prototyping. One academic administrator described how these skills contributed to the development of a particular new innovative project:

We adopted design thinking methodology, an approach to innovation where you try to prototype the smallest possible example of what you're trying to create, and have a proof of concept. This creates greater awareness, buy-in, and understanding on your part of what you're doing. Then you iterate and build from there. On one project, we got partners and built... a lab that could persuade by the power of the idea, not the blunt force of the cost. We do things small and relatively inexpensively.

Participants explained that the ability to prototype allows projects to move forward because the approach allows progress with minimal resources. Additionally, the development of these skills is reflective of a larger emphasis on learning from failure.

Learning from failure. During the sustaining change phase, the environment at Technology University has emphasized that when failure occurs, learning should follow. There is a broad understanding that attempting new approaches creates the opportunity to learn from failure, an emphasis evident among enrollment and student services departments. One staff member described her perspective:

The people who work with me would tell you, I am for failure. I'm all for trying new ideas and you're never going to be penalized for failing. You will be penalized for not trying something new and failing. If you're failing from doing the same thing, that's a whole different problem. But if you're failing because we tried something new, found out that didn't work, and tried something else again, that is the spirit of my team and people.

The work of professors who are developing skills in research design methodology, which emphasizes a bias for action, testing, and prototyping, have

contributed to an understanding that learning from failure can lead to problem solving and innovation. In recent years, one lab space has been opened for all students to experiment with various tangible approaches to problem solving. This space has become a highlighted area for academic and enrollment staff related to innovation. One staff director spoke of her appreciation for the professor who directs the lab because “his motto is ‘fail often.’ Failing often is going to lead to something really great.”

Participants explained that having a lab at the center of campus based on research design methodology has promoted the benefit of testing and failing, as long as learning is occurring. In describing the sustaining change phase at Technology University, this section has addressed the environmental characteristics of the organizational identity, increasing change-orientation, and a permission to fail. The next section describes the characteristic of evaluating and anticipating the context for higher education.

Evaluating and anticipating the context for higher education. During the sustaining change phase, a commitment was demonstrated to evaluating the current status of higher education along with forecasting future scenarios and implications. A key step for the institution in developing this understanding broadly, particularly among faculty, was assigning a task force of administrators and professors to create a white paper about the status of higher education along with identifying future possibilities for the institution to pursue in response to changing dynamics. An administrator who served as a member of the task force explained:

Our intention was to provide a landscape for higher education, some suggestions for where the university fits in that landscape, and where we see potential for growth. In the suggestions, it was startling for some people.... Sweet Briar hadn't

happened, everybody's still trying to figure out what the economic crash meant. Largely, people weren't aware of the challenges that all universities were facing. Once that report was written and presented to the faculty, staff, and board, it gave us common language to talk about these issues, acknowledge them, and recognize they are widespread and we're not immune.

Several participants commented on the benefit this white paper provided in initiating widespread dialogue and creating a foundational level of knowledge about the broader context of higher education nationally.

Prior to developing suggestions for the institution, the working group met with each academic department to discuss its views on what was central to the institution. An administrator explained: "We believe we have something unique to offer so we need to figure out a way to continue offering that. We focused mostly on mission and scope..." The combination of focusing on mission and collecting input allowed for developing recommendations that were manageable and acceptable to the organization following the implementation of the technology initiative. However, the initial reception to the report was troubled because of the realistic picture that was presented, and it took time for people to recognize the context for higher education. An administrator explained:

The new ideas got a little bit overshadowed by the reality at that point.... But eventually you make peace because seeing articles in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Education* support the claims this paper is making.... Once the ideas and the reality became more familiar, people began to understand this is true and it's not just us. These are issues that everyone in higher education is dealing with right now. It settled a little bit, and people were

able to think more about, the sky isn't falling... but we need to make plans so that we can continue our mission.

One participant compared the initial response to the task force's report to the "stages of grief" but after the "knee-jerk reaction to deny," people began to work on new ideas for fulfilling the institution's mission in newer and innovative ways.

Since the release of the report and eventual acceptance of the changing context confronting higher education generally and Technology University specifically, there has been a demonstrated commitment to regularly evaluate these issues. An academic administrator said:

That independent report was circulated broadly and got a lot of attention. It served to say clearly, "Here's where we are, but this is not sustainable. This is a problem." Subsequently, the administrative team has worked hard at greater transparency in terms of those realities, particularly financial realities, so people know more about the complexity of that and the issues related. They have been given more of those data points.

Employees are increasingly attempting to identify challenges and forecast opportunities, with an underlying focus on the student experience.

Evaluating and responding to current context. Participants throughout the university expressed a high level of understanding about the many issues currently confronting higher education institutions during the sustaining change phase. For example, administrators, faculty, and staff spoke about the pressing economic realities for colleges and universities, changing student demographics, an increasing preference among families for professional academic programs, and rapid advances in technology as

impacting the national and regional context. One professor described some of these challenges by saying, “There is less student demand, more competition, and rising discount rates. Students get so many offers, especially those high achieving students that we want.” Participants reported their perceptions of these issues as contributing to a “competitive” climate of U.S. higher education. An awareness of these current challenges has increasingly prompted employees to review institutional practices and offerings, including current programs, delivery models, teaching styles, and enrollment strategies. One administrator described how “examining our own portfolio” in relation to national and regional trends is an important part of the institution’s environment. Evaluating and responding to the context has been enhanced by communication from administrators.

Communication from administrators. Administrative leaders contribute to understanding the context for higher education by regularly disseminating data and communicating about trends. The white paper established a precedent for communicating about the context of higher education, and that pattern of communication has continued during the sustaining change phase. An academic administrator echoed the perceptions of numerous participants who commented that as a result of such communications, “people are more aware of the necessity of change intellectually. They’ve been given the opportunity to be exposed to more data that explains to them the necessity for change. Intellectually, they understand the dilemma.”

Executive leaders explained that communicating about the context of U.S. higher education was an important strategy when considering change initiatives. One

administrator discussed the connection between the context and the need for change at the institution:

You have to be able to point to examples, whether in our industry or others, that this world is not a static place. The first main component for most people is to understand the context that we're in... We're changing because the world around us is changing.

An additional strategy related to the theme of consistent communication by executive leaders includes disseminating information about the plans under consideration and the reasoning for the decisions being made. Several participants noted that increased openness from administrators in recent years about the status of the institution and data contributing to decisions had enhanced the trust level. One administrative leader explained his approach when communicating with his team about change initiatives:

We are letting team members know that we're not doing things on a whim. We're trying to be informed by the market, but we're not trying to be the market. Our goal is not to replicate. Usually, when we're studying other folks, it's about "How can we learn from what they're doing? Then how can we do it better?"

Regular communication from administrative leaders has helped cultivate an understanding that innovation and change needs to occur, in part due to the challenges confronting higher education. This communication about context and challenges for the institution has provided a foundation for ongoing change.

Foundation for change. The awareness of the higher education context and accepting that the status quo is unsustainable have provided a foundation for ongoing change at Technology University during the sustaining change phase. Participants

explained that economic realities, changing student demographics, and technology improvements were “driving change” at the institution. An administrator described the environment by saying, “Virtually everyone knows we must do some things in new and different ways.” In addition, an understanding of competition with other institutions has fostered a desire to create and maintain an organizational niche. An administrator explained:

How do we remain relevant? We’re in a rural location and... there are all these things going against us from a revenue side, so we have to be distinctive. We have to be unique because of our mission, location, and academic profile. If we don’t do things that are innovative and unique and create some level of distinction, then we have an underlying fear of not being relevant.

Another important comparison has been in relation to institutions making innovative advances. One administrator has found it important to consistently ask whether “we are doing enough to keep up” as a means of evaluating Technology University’s status.

Although the institution has generally maintained a strong financial position, people have increasingly recognized that the model of private higher education is difficult to sustain, which has reinforced the necessity for change. One administrator detailed the current budget challenges:

There’s obviously economic urgency. We have a somewhat broken economic model in private higher education, especially in Christian private higher education. We’re in an odd circumstance: We actually enjoy historically high enrollments by headcount, yet we are losing ground in terms of revenue inflows. Multiple factors are depressing the revenue stream. Discounting is part of the

problem, but also increasing numbers of students are matriculating with large amounts of credit under their belt. From a consumer point of view, they're buying less and less of our "product." You can be fooled by the paradox: flush enrollment with full dorms, but less income. Meanwhile, expenses are rising. There's no way to completely control external costs. There has to be another way. Even if faculty are begrudging about it, they're getting the picture that we can't just keep doing "the same old, same old." Status quo means a slow suicide. This understanding of the financial picture has started to raise questions about the long-term viability and even survival of the institution. One administrator said, "Sometimes what motivates people to really get off the dime is when they realize something is going to have to be done, because if we keep doing what we're doing, we're not going to exist." The concern about long-term viability was viewed as providing a foundation for change and acceptance of new ideas.

Participants described several initiatives that have been impacted by the growing awareness of regional and national trends. One academic administrator described his work with leading an initiative and subsequent adjustments over several years:

I said frequently we need to peer out of the confinement of the campus and look at what's really going on around us.... This second or maybe even third iteration has been much more successful in understanding the larger climate.... We have gone out and seen other, better, and best practices. We have brought more voices in who have not been ensconced in the university... and we've become stronger as a result.

This understanding about the need to evaluate in comparison to best practices elsewhere was communicated by interview participants from throughout the institution.

Additionally, participants noted that faculty-driven changes reflect an awareness of current changes as one academic administrator explained:

I've seen an increase in the departments that are proposing innovative programs.

They're thinking through how to develop programs that marry undergraduate with graduate, take advantage of hybrid possibilities, or are delivered fully online.

We've always had some of that, but the adoption of those ideas by faculty who have been here for 30-plus years with lots of experience in the undergraduate residential model is encouraging. They are proposing these programs that 5 years ago they would not have been comfortable with. Having the time to think through changes in higher education, its effect on our university, and what we want to continue in terms of our mission, has led them to that place.

As faculty and staff members have accepted the budget realities confronting higher education and the institution, they have experienced some level of angst. A professor described her views about discussions related to budgets and resulting impacts from changes:

Sometimes I get frustrated with things, like a conversation about needing a more cost-effective delivery. The part of me that loves my discipline and loves teaching doesn't like that. But I also know the reality is I want to keep doing what we're doing... It's a stewardship issue for me. I want to keep the university going, and we ought to operate on a balanced budget.

These comments reflected a general understanding that the shifting context for higher education requires accepting some approaches that may not be the “ideal” from the perspective of some, but which allow the ongoing fulfillment of the institution’s mission. Yet several participants expressed their sense of expectation that the current climate would inform the institution’s strategy for years to come. A manager explained, “The pressure to bring on new programs and curriculum, that’s not going away. If we want to continue to exist and thrive, there has to be a spirit of change that’s pervasive to who we are.” As described in the preceding sections, evaluating the context of higher education has provided a foundation for change at Technology University. Another element identified in the data has been forecasting future opportunities.

Forecasting. During the sustaining change phase, institutional leaders and faculty have made intentional efforts to anticipate future challenges and opportunities. One administrator explained this environmental characteristic:

You have to be able to anticipate what’s on the horizon rather than what’s in front of you. Most institutions are pretty good at chasing after what the current theme is. The really good universities are the ones that anticipate where the next wave will be.

The emphasis on forecasting was rooted in practices developed during the technology initiative. Dr. Jones described the importance of a practice among his leadership team to analyze the rapid pace of change in today’s society: “You really need to have at least some of the team focusing on what the next problem will be that’s going to be created by the solution you developed today.” The goal for this exercise of looking ahead to the

next challenge was to cultivate a climate in which people could “anticipate” future opportunities and challenges.

Participants described the environment as one in which employees across the institution are reviewing relevant research and considering implications for education during the coming years. An academic administrator described the correlation between research and forecasting:

We are primarily looking at literature of innovation in higher education and asking where is our trajectory leading us? How can we skip a generation of development? Looking down the road and saying, “Do we have to travel the whole road to get to where we want to be? Can we advance?” That's a matter of visioning and a matter of scanning.

The institution has developed structures to ensure regular research and dialogue that contribute to forecasting. For example, one academic dean explained the ongoing work of the committee comprised of administrators, faculty, and staff that contributed to the technology initiative:

We're asking, where are we now? What are the top three to five trends in the next 3 to 5 years? Which of those seem most likely and applicable to our context? Which of those do we actually want to invest in? What would be metrics that would help us decide?

Participants expressed a sense that having these conversations and the structures that support them contribute to an orientation toward the future. One professor said that as part of strategic planning, people are asking, “What is the future of education? How can

we improve what we do in terms of delivering content and making more efficient use of time and resources?”

Being aware of current realities facing higher education, along with anticipating the future, has incentivized an openness to desired institutional change. One administrator said, “Projecting into the future and how the status quo will not survive is an important part of the change process. That’s ultimately what motivates people to at least come along if they’re not going to be an initiator.” New initiatives have been developed and implemented based on research and anticipating the future. For example, one academic administrator identified a recent change initiative that resulted from institutional leaders “regularly conversing and researching for the purpose of advancing university programs into new realities and needs.” The environmental characteristic of evaluating and anticipating the context for higher education also included a focus on students that contributes to the sustaining change phase.

Focus on students. Another element that contributes to a contextual awareness at Technology University is the importance of focusing on students as a driving force for change. Administrators, faculty, and staff who were interviewed frequently identified the purpose of change initiatives as providing better service or learning experiences for students. As an example, Dr. Williams stated, “We think the benefits of being willing to open ourselves up to a lot of new and different things will benefit the institution and our students, and we’re going to keep the students right at the heart of it.” Participants also expressed a commitment to understanding student populations and changing needs. One manager explained, “We want what’s best for our students and deep learning to occur in

the classroom. We believe committing to that means understanding the pulse of our society and students who are coming to our campus.”

Participants described several change initiatives that were pursued with the goal of enhancing the student experience. There is consistent attention to ensuring the level of service to students is streamlined and accessible. An administrator discussing a change initiative said, “We just started talking through the flow of the first, second, and third year student and what they’re experiencing and asked ourselves, ‘Is that optimal?’ No it wasn’t.” A manager explained that this focus on students has provided the impetus for much of the change that has occurred in recent years. She stated:

We care so deeply about our students, their learning, and what they want and think. I don’t know how else we could implement or believe in our changes if we didn’t see our students wanting and needing it... We have shaped ourselves to ensure that the education we are providing our students meets their needs... That has been the core of who we are.

These comments reflected a commitment from numerous participants to be aware of how the current educational experience aligned with needs for student learning based on changing demographics. Another academic administrator said:

The question that leadership asks in academic support regularly is, how can we do things better for our students? People come together and the expectation is to say, “What have you learned about our students? What are new ideas that you’re seeing in the environment and on the horizon that may be important to our students?”

People explained that the question of “How we can change for the sake of our students?” is a consistent driver of evaluating current practices during the sustaining change phase.

The focus on students was also evident by observing the physical spaces on campus. Significant venues have been dedicated to contribute to student learning, including ample collaborative work space as well as several labs on campus, some of which are open to all students. Most of these spaces have been reconfigured and refurbished in response to creative ideas. As an example, the provost described a former gym that was being redesigned to serve as a lab following a visit to a partner institution in Europe. Observing the way buildings had been reconfigured at that location provided a “new lens” when considering the use of space on the Technology University campus.

The emphasis at Technology University of centering on the student experience has created a vision in which all employees can participate. One manager discussed how this idea contributes to bringing people along with change efforts:

It’s about painting the picture of a better world. Because when we’re looking for wins, I’m always going to come at things from a student perspective. How’s this going to be better for our students? If you’re telling me you want to make a change... you can’t do anything that’s going to make anything harder for our students, even if it’s immensely better for us. That’s not okay, and everybody who works for me knows that.

These comments captured a common perspective at the institution in which student learning and experience have been and continue to be a central motivator for change efforts. Having discussed the environmental characteristics of the organizational identity, increasing change-orientation, permission to fail, and evaluating and anticipating the

context for higher education at Technology University, the next section addresses the role of collaboration.

Collaboration. Administrators, faculty, and staff interviewees described an ability to partner together in innovative work during the sustaining change phase at Technology University. Participants explained that the culture of the institution traditionally has emphasized autonomy within departments; in contrast, attempting to accomplish bigger objectives has necessitated intentional collaboration. One manager explained the current ethos:

Everything here tends to happen collaboratively. There's just not that many edicts from on high.... Departments and divisions tend to be fairly autonomous but they have to work together if they want to do anything bigger.... There's no way to do anything unless you're willing to collaborate across lines and with other people.

Some participants noted that the size of the institution helps to foster collaboration, as one administrator explained:

We've been at a sweet spot of size for change in that we're big enough where you have resources available and you can do and try new things.... But it's also small enough where you know everybody and... have a sense of the spirit of collaboration. It's easy to collaborate because it's a fairly bite-sized institution.

This section addresses elements that have contributed to a collaborative environment during the sustaining change phase, specifically administrative efforts, valuing faculty, and moving beyond hierarchy.

Administrative efforts. Participants described recent efforts by administrators to intentionally cultivate a collaborative environment. Several people particularly highlighted the way the provost engages with faculty. He was described as someone with a desire to collaborate as well as an ability to accomplish objectives. The provost described his own style:

My approach is typically to present the problem of what we're trying to figure out. I might present a couple possible solutions that we're thinking about but am open to other solutions, for us to openly talk about.... What are some better ways to have it work? The expectation is not one of collaboration at any cost, because that can lead to bad decision making and everybody being dissatisfied. But let's start with an assumption of collaboration and work toward a solution.

The provost explained that collaboration may require "too great of a cost," but "vetting" collaboration rather than beginning with an assumption of "entrenchment" makes it much more viable to bring people together.

The interview data suggested that academic administrators typically attempted to balance a value for collaboration with institutional goals or challenges. Participants described a need to present data and trends to faculty while also retaining a focus on the institution's mission. The provost explained:

We spend a lot of time in our faculty meetings trying to be transparent with budget and plans. Understanding that there's no perfect pathway but trying to select what seems to be collectively the best pathway... Charting a course, acknowledging imperfection, but at the same time, the fact that there still has to

be action. That status quo isn't going to be acceptable but also showing why that is.

The purpose of these efforts, according to the provost, has been working toward a goal of “shared understanding” to the extent that is possible.

The administrators who were interviewed for this study generally described an approach of partnering with other divisions. For some, collaboration provided a tactic that would allow long-term implementation rather than short-term compliance. For example, the provost explained his preference to focus on “mission and benefit” in place of “mandate and economic decision making” when dialoguing about change and innovation. He stated:

You might end up at the same place, but it creates a very different atmosphere and probably a better product. People will comply with things, but you don't really innovate out of that because it's just the boundaries of your compliance.

Others recognized the potential for accomplishing significant projects through collaboration across multiple divisions. One recently hired cabinet-level administrator expressed a general preference to work collaboratively as much as possible:

One of the things I wanted to push was that we don't have departmental initiatives but institution initiatives. I don't want to think about it in terms of a project being ours to protect. If people think they can do things better, let's talk to them and find out.

With this approach, the executive hoped to identify ways to work together or transition a project to another department if it was better suited to handle the responsibilities.

In some cases, executive leaders choose to proceed with an initiative when adequate support is present to allow collaboration to occur. This type of decision is based on the recognition that complete support was unlikely to be achieved. Dr. Jones explained:

Faculty by nature are skeptical, and therefore you never have total buy-in. That's one of the things I had to learn because I'm a people pleaser. That's a good thing in a way, but it gets in my way for tough decisions. You have to become skilled in building a strong consensus and then going with that, rather than trying to get everybody on board, because you never will do that.

In addition to deciding when to move ahead even without full support, Dr. Williams described a different challenge of leadership – trying to determine where the line is for the amount of change that can be tolerated within the organization and working toward that line. The president described this “dance” as consistently occurring. The commitment by administrative leaders to collaborate during the sustaining change phase is demonstrated by valuing faculty.

Valuing faculty. A significant contributor to the collaboration many participants described as characterizing the ethos at Technology University was a commitment from executive leaders to value the work and input from faculty. Cabinet-level administrators communicated a high level of respect for faculty and the contribution professors make to the institution. A senior-level leader described his conviction in this regard:

You have to begin with the belief that faculty absolutely want what's best for students and for the future of what they do. Things that professors hold on to aren't because of laziness or just to be obstinate. You can always find examples,

but that is by far rare. You should begin with the idea that everybody's fully vested and passionate about what we're doing, and would be open to a different approach. But they will only accept that if it seems like there's some certainty it will benefit the mission and students.

A commitment to dialogue with faculty was frequently cited by participants as being a key contributor to collaboration as well as providing support after decisions have been made. An academic administrator stated:

We highly value faculty input into all things. When someone's opinion is valued and they're listened to, even if their own initial idea is not what the outcome is, they can see their fingerprints on the outcome and that helps with adoption.

Executive leaders focused on identifying issues of "shared importance" to generate "acceptance" along with potential partnership with faculty for new approaches. An additional element identified as part of collaboration was working together across traditional lines.

Beyond hierarchy. The environment at Technology University was described as supportive of collaboration due to consistent demonstration of employees looking beyond hierarchy to work together on projects. Participants explained that people generally are less concerned about "structure" and focus more on potential cooperative efforts. One administrator explained:

We are very good in terms of people being willing to look past their fiefdoms and say, how can we do this better? How can we improve what we're doing? That comes and goes, ebbs and flows, with personalities and people in different roles. But that's one of the things that we have going for us is a lot of deep relationships

and collaboration. People understand where we are in higher education and where we need to go.

Several people described change and innovative efforts beginning with collegial relationships and asking about how a department or division can “do better” for the other area.

The institution has developed multiple strategies for encouraging people to work collaboratively across structures and hierarchy. One academic administrator described a representative group that developed an initiative together. He said, “That is very common for us, getting a cross section of staff and faculty to implement something. We do that very well to try and represent different elements of the campus in any large scale decision making process.” Another academic administrator described the strategy and benefits for ensuring creative thinkers at all levels of the organization were involved with innovative projects:

Within every organization there are forward thinkers, people who are outside the box in terms of a willingness to imagine. We try to pull them into conversations regardless of hierarchy.... Sometimes they’re the ones with the best ideas. Just because you have the title doesn’t mean you have the ideas.

This approach also “creates succession management” by expanding involvement within the organization when leaders transition to different positions; there are potential replacements who are already part of the culture. The section explored the collaboration evident during the sustaining change phase, joining the previously described environmental characteristics of the organizational identity, increasing change-orientation, permission to fail, and evaluating and anticipating the context for higher

education. The next section introduces the intentional communication apparent during this phase.

Intentional communication. The environment reflected consistent and intentional communication by employees throughout the university that contributes to change initiatives. A professor explained:

At high points, change has been able to occur because people in different corners of the institution can talk. I think that ebbs and flows. At key moments, there were opportunities for energized and interested parties from IT, educational technology, faculty development center, faculty, and all corners to converge and be able to inform mutual work.

This type of communication reportedly was occurring between people at all levels of the organization, thereby contributing to the generation and cultivation of innovative ideas.

A professor described the benefits of open communication within the institution:

There have been projects and programs where flatness to the conversations has allowed for advancement. People are not overly impressed by somebody's title but their ability to bring fertile, creative thinking to the table and push and pull on those ideas.

This section further describes the characteristic of intentional communication by exploring open communication and building trust.

Open communication. Participants described an environment in which administrators solicit input, and faculty and staff feel comfortable openly sharing ideas or suggestions. It is a regular practice for executive leaders to engage in dialogue with faculty and staff regarding a potential change. A professor described the interactions

between professors and executive leaders by saying, “The conversations between faculty and the administration have been very democratic, even with issues that are critical to our institution and identity. We are open to disagree and if needed, we’ll do that publicly, and that is respected.” This feedback loop of requesting input, encouraging open communication, and adjusting actions has created a sense that the perspectives of faculty and staff are valued. Cabinet-level administrators emphasize open communication with employees but also maintain a resolve to move initiatives forward as described by one leader:

Staff and faculty need to be part of the process, but they don’t need to drive the process. It’s very important to continue those relationships to the point that you can open the door both ways and say, “We’re trying this differently because of these reasons. But we need your help in that process to understand what you know so we can consider those things and the direction we want to head.”

Several participants noted their perception that space exists within the organization to critique an initiative or approach that is not working. An academic administrator explained:

Folks feel free to speak out. They will say if something’s not working or a disaster. There’s freedom to do that. There’s no penalty, either professionally, politically or anything like that. We want to try and cut our losses. Part of being nimble is getting out from something that’s failing. There has to be some kind of openness toward criticism.

Administrators have communicated openly and intentionally as a method for providing motivation for change. Honest messages about the status of the institution has helped instigate action. One administrator said:

Part of the process of creating this change environment is to effectively tell the story for why we've got to do something. If we don't do something, our future is not going to continue with the current experience. The status quo is not going to be the future.

Participants expressed appreciation for intentional efforts by executive leaders to openly communicate with faculty and staff about the status of the institution as well as initiatives.

Building trust. Creating opportunities for discussion, particularly with faculty, has been an important communication method for engendering trust. One administrator stated:

Helping to create that culture and address change issues has been the result of leadership opening the dialogue and allowing space for dialogue. At the same time, not allowing the dialogue to continue to fester for so long that nothing ever gets done. That is the real art.

This element of building trust with faculty members through intentional communication reflects significant work by the president and other executives following some challenges that included personnel transitions. Participants explained that just a few years ago there had been some misgivings, particularly among faculty, about the trust level of faculty toward the administrative leadership. However, efforts by administrators to openly

communicate in various settings, including employee meetings and smaller groups, has rebuilt trust. A professor explained:

I've seen the president and a lot of the upper leadership really pushing to be more transparent and communicate better. With distrust, communication is always an issue. That's helped because a lot of that distrust has settled down and we've gotten back into our rhythm.

Additionally, the provost's approach of communicating openly and asking for input was reported to have contributed to a higher level of trust among faculty. In particular, the provost's willingness to directly address questions in many settings about change projects has proven to be helpful in sustaining an openness to institutional change. An administrator stated:

In faculty meetings the provost is good at being non-defensive, opening the floor to questions, and letting the contrarians speak. Of course, that's only one way you do it. You also have your one-on-one meetings and work closely with an active, powerful faculty senate. You spend time with the president of the faculty senate, and you make sure he or she understands your motivation and rationale. And you do everything you can to encourage trust and respect.

The ability and willingness of the provost to initiate helpful dialogue with faculty has facilitated making progress on initiatives and enhanced the level of trust across campus. One administrator affirmed: "We've got a tremendous provost who has a great capacity for being able to help move people along without feeling like they're being railroaded into something or like they've had no input. That's the real art of change management." This section described the environmental characteristic of intentional

communication during the sustaining change phase and is followed by an exploration of the characteristic of designated resources and structures.

Designated resources and structures. Leaders at Technology University have demonstrated a commitment to encourage and support innovation by designating resources and developing structures throughout the university during the sustaining change phase. An administrator explained:

You have to carve out time for people to be creative, whether that's finding a sabbatical or space within people's schedules, creating events, colloquiums, something for which those creative juices can work... Otherwise, the natural course is that people are busy with what they're currently involved in. Unless you force them out of that and provide space to allow creativity to occur, it's not going to happen. You have to be very intentional.

Participants identified several initiatives for which executive leaders had designated funds specifically for innovative efforts. The sense within the environment was reportedly that change and innovation did not have to be achieved solely with current budgets or structures; rather, the possibility for resourcing a project with new funds existed. Examples for this funding were related to academic projects, student services, student life, and enrollment. One administrator described how designating funds for innovation relates to learning from failure:

There are few times when I view a test as a failure. It may not be a winner, but it wasn't a failure because we learned that doesn't work... I feel like I'm allowed to spend some money each year on things that could be winners. But if they don't

win, I'm not going to have someone looking over my shoulder saying, "What in the world were you doing?"

In some cases, funds for change initiatives have been identified through a process of "investing and divesting" whereby strategic decisions are made to designate resources for a priority while reducing funds in another area.

The strategic planning process at Technology University was also identified as a contributor to innovation and change. The process is established with regular meetings, but there is also allowance for flexibility. The strategic planning group meets periodically and includes a review of new opportunities and challenges, along with current initiatives. In addition, institutional leaders have the leeway to build from ideas generated from strategic planning discussions. An academic administrator explained his perception of the benefits of this process:

Sustained innovation cannot occur without good, rigorous structure, including habits and disciplines of life and being as an organization. Some of the best ideas don't come directly out of those strategic planning sessions, but they give the best ideas a life going forward... We are able to grab it and say, 'How do we implement or operationalize that?'

Participants described the strategic plan as playing an important role, particularly for identifying the "best ideas" at the time.

A key element of dedicating resources and structures to enhance innovation and change at Technology University has been a focus on faculty. The remainder of this section describes how the institution has encouraged and incentivized faculty to change

and innovate as well as the professional development opportunities available at the faculty development center.

Encouraging and incentivizing faculty. The data from this study demonstrated that organizational leaders have encouraged and incentivized faculty to engage with innovative projects. One professor said, “The university has found ways to empower or incentivize faculty participation in these conversations.” In many instances, faculty have been encouraged to pursue their own ideas. One professor explained:

The university has a positive record for supporting the wild hare idea, even without 100% being able to identify the impact of that idea. We’ve got faculty fellowships this last semester going to folks who wanted to work with students to investigate drones and game theory. It is placing a series of small bets and bets on things that are not going to be the teaching and learning panacea.

At other times, administrators have identified ways to incentivize professors to pursue new approaches. One of the structural elements promoting faculty engagement has been creating several professional development positions that have been filled by faculty members. Numerous faculty on campus have split responsibilities as a professor and director in a lab or faculty development role. People in these positions continue to develop their skills as teachers and are viewed credibly by colleagues for their leadership in a lab or contributing to faculty development.

A second important strategy for providing opportunities to innovate is through offering grants for which professors can apply. A recent example is an innovative instruction grant process that will initially fund four innovative ideas. After 1 year of testing, two ideas will be selected to receive a second year of funding. The goal is to

identify new methods that can be applied broadly. The provost described the philosophy for this approach:

It's not just us doing something better but also changing something structurally, gaining revenue, or something leading to savings or an increase in efficiency.

We'll have funding tied to release faculty and support them in material ways to create something... We're enhancing the idea of creativity vs. compliance. I think that's a different spirit. We can have people compliant to force creativity. Or we can create an atmosphere where we're rewarding those that want to come up with good ideas and put them forward.

Another strategy has been to request assistance from faculty who lead the way in experimenting with creative methods. People perceived as innovative teachers are asked to further develop their methods or try a new approach in which administrative leaders are interested. A professor explained that this "targeted shoulder tapping" encourages professors to "imagine" new ideas leading to "generative" methods.

Participants recognized the pragmatic benefits for professors who choose to experiment with new approaches. One academic dean said, "We give grants to folks who work on stuff so they can put it on their CV. There's money if they work on something during the summer, so it's both monetary and promotional. There's a carrot there." People also noted that faculty who demonstrate proficiency with new approaches receive public recognition, such as presenting in various settings.

Ensuring faculty are involved throughout change initiatives has been a consistent approach at Technology University. One professor explained the benefit of this approach:

At key moments, you're putting people in these conversations who are not solely technologists... We're faculty members looking for solutions to real problems we've seen in the classroom. We have different ears to listen to our colleagues and the problems they're bumping up against.

Incorporating faculty at the center of change initiatives has ensured change initiatives remain centered on the institutional mission element of teaching and learning.

Designating resources and structures to incentivize innovation were perceived as worthwhile investments, similar to the faculty development center.

Faculty development center. A primary resource created by the university that has provided significant and long-term benefits during the sustaining change phase is the faculty development center, which provides optional training opportunities for professors. Innovative approaches are presented, and people are able to decide their level of interest and participation. A professor who works in the department explained:

We're all about faculty walking in and saying, "What about this?" We're happy to do consultation with faculty even if it's, "I saw this one thing and I don't even know how to do it." Then, we'll try to figure out how to help do that. Sometimes that's just, "We're going to give you the training. We're going to show you how to use this platform, or we're going to do the research to help you find out what you need." Then sometimes, it's in forms of funding or release time, depending on the issue.

Faculty understand that the center is a place where they can seek support from instructional designers as well as funding for materials and equipment or release time.

Several participants spoke with deep appreciation for the faculty development center and the opportunities presented there. A common perspective was that the faculty development center pushes new ideas and practices related to teaching and learning, ensuring people continually have a chance to improve. An academic dean stated:

The people in the faculty development center are always asking questions about how we could do it better. They are bringing people on campus, having people who are on campus present best practices, and discussing innovative approaches to things... There's an entity on campus that is focused on the newest and best in teaching and learning.

This work is particularly helpful for professors who are new to teaching or unaware of the latest research related to teaching and learning. One administrator described these broad and systemic benefits:

We do a good job with the faculty development center, bringing ideas to people who might not be as familiar with them, and then providing mentors and support. There's a systematic approach of taking people who are doing a good job, getting their methods out in front of others, and bringing people onto campus.

Participants described the staff in the faculty development center as “unique” and “innovative” due to an ability to present new concepts and create lunchtime conversations and other events that “socialize” the ideas.

The creation of this center years ago, along with continual attention devoted to best practices in teaching and learning, has fostered an environment in which an extraordinarily high percentage of faculty engage with services offered in the center.

Several participants noted the extraordinary number of professors who attend events at the center, particularly compared to other institutions.

The center plays a key role in providing a place and structure for professors to interact with each other and develop skills. Many events hosted by the faculty development center include lunch, so faculty have the opportunity to develop relationships with professors from other fields. The combination of significant faculty involvement, interest in trying new approaches, and having a meal together, cultivates cross-disciplinary conversations and possibilities. One professor explained:

The interest in this faculty wanting to eat together and engage in conversation is abnormal and foundational... There are opportunities for cross talk across disciplines and it's a unique environmental factor. The everyday likelihood that a higher percentage of faculty from all corners would have interacted with, rubbed shoulders with, pushed and pulled on the ideas of colleagues in different departments, is increased.

An academic dean talked about the benefits of eating lunch at the center with faculty from other departments:

That's one of the mechanisms by which you're going to get to know folks outside your college or department. You have so much to do in your own department or college. It's not like I have all this extra time so I'm going to spend it eating with the business professors. You know you're not going to do that. Anyone across campus couldn't do that. But if you're sitting beside them at lunch, and you're watching someone or hearing someone, then you have a conversation and realize,

we could work together on this. It mixes folks together more than any other thing that I can think of on campus.

Participants recognized that the faculty development center helps counteract common tendency for “silos” to develop within disciplines and colleges. This section has described the environmental characteristic of designated resources and structures, particularly through encouraging and incentivizing faculty as well as the faculty development center. The following section addresses the final characteristic during the sustaining change phase, which is challenges with implementing and timing change efforts.

Challenges with implementing and timing change. Although Technology University has cultivated an environment that sustains change efforts, participants recognized challenges with implementing and timing change initiatives as they were identified as areas of growth. Several participants discussed the challenge of moving from the idea stage of an initiative to action. Participants explained that generating new ideas is a strength, but as Dr. Williams stated, “I would not say that it’s always easy to move beyond the discussion to the implementation.” An administrator explained that a healthy skepticism may prompt delays in action:

We are more innovative than not, but there’s still the need to prove out concepts. There’s not an idea that adoption of new is better. Things have to be proven, they are still going to be challenged and questioned. Part of innovation isn’t just adoption of the newest technique but whether this a better technique. If not, why are we doing it? This campus still expects dialogue, rationale, and the ability to say no. But also appreciates an idea that’s better than the one we have today.

For some people, delays with implementation cause frustration and concern about impacts on the institution's ability to compete.

The perception of whether innovation is occurring quickly enough or too fast varied among participants. Some people spoke of a need to move more quickly; others recognized a pace that is fast within higher education. A manager stated:

We move fast and sometimes that's good, sometimes that's bad. There's a steamroller effect when there is priority given to an initiative. When those high level visions are set, there's a steamroller effect toward meeting those goals.

Don't get in the way of them or you'll get run over. Either get on the steamroller or get off.

Adapting to a quicker pace of innovation with which many professors are not familiar has taken some time and will require ongoing adjustment. An academic dean explained:

As a faculty, we are getting used to the rapidity with which new ideas come on, are developed, implemented, and assessed. We're still in the early stages to see if they are going to be maintained or not... That is becoming a regular feature of campus life that we are bringing whole new programs on within a manner of months, not years or decades.

Participants explained that the increasing pace of change is providing a "new paradigm" for people in the organization.

Despite some challenges with implementing change, along with a level of skepticism, participants described a general willingness among faculty to participate in change initiatives or at least allow innovation to occur. One administrator explained:

There is a commitment and readiness to change on both the faculty side of the house as well as the administrative side. It is a happy place where there is a general understanding that change is not only inevitable, it's good and necessary. That is not to say there aren't pockets of resistance. There always are. But I don't hear people saying at this institution, 'We just don't do that around here "because we've always done it this way."'

Over time, an increasing number of people have accepted that Technology University is a place where innovation and change will occur. One administrator explained how he perceives attitudes and perceptions toward change: "Overall, I see it as positive. It's certainly not less positive. It may be also resignation that the train has left the station. This is what we're about."

Technology University Conclusion

This case study described the environmental characteristics present during Technology University's transition to become an innovative leader in higher education. The three phases evident throughout significant and ongoing adaptive changes were as follows: (a) motivating change, (b) implementing change, and (c) sustaining change. The Technology University case study began with the motivating change phase and the fostering of an environment conducive to innovation, followed by the generation of a disruptive idea to enhance the teaching and learning experience for faculty and students. The second phase of implementing change described the launch of the technology initiative, which contributed to building a new identity of the institution as a place of innovation. The third phase of sustaining change explained how the institution has cultivated an environment conducive to ongoing change and innovation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify environmental characteristics within institutions that allow adaptive change to occur on an ongoing basis. The research question guiding the study was: *What are the environmental characteristics within a higher education institution that consistently produce adaptive change?* Despite the many difficulties confronting higher education administrators and faculty, Program College and Technology University have cultivated an environment in which adaptive change occurs on a regular basis. Although similar phases of motivating, implementing, and sustaining change were identified at each site, there were comparable and different themes within each phase. Analysis of the themes are described in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The research for this comparative case-study analysis followed the methodological approach of Yin (2014), as described in Chapter 3, with a goal of identifying similar or dissimilar environmental characteristics at two innovative universities. Yin recommended analyzing each case separately prior to synthesizing the cases for similar or differing themes, a process that results in robust findings. Chapter 4 described the individual case studies of Program College and Technology University with a focus on the unique environmental characteristics that seemed to contribute to enduring adaptive change. Table 1 documents the themes identified during the phases of motivating, implementing, and sustaining change for each institution.

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to explore the similarities and differences identified in the case studies at Program College and Technology University. This chapter addresses the primary themes that emerged during the data analysis of the case studies, with specific attention to comparisons resulting from the research question guiding the study: *What are the environmental characteristics within a higher education institution that consistently produce adaptive change?*

The model of adaptive change provided the framework for my research and analysis of the environments at Program College and Technology University. Adaptive change is required when the deeply held beliefs of individuals or organizations are

Table 1

Themes Identified at Program College and Technology University

Program College	Technology University
Motivating Change:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desire to survive Recognizing a missed opportunity Executive leaders as change catalysts Creating an awareness of context Trust Communicating a need to change Difficult decisions Resistance and detractors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hiring innovative people Developing a climate for innovation Ideas emerging from within the organization Understanding technology and impacts Leaders responding to opportunity
Implementing Change:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early success Encouraging feedback Increasing accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connection to teaching mission Imagining possibilities Seeing others make changes Experimentation and results Encouraging faculty buy-in
Sustaining Change:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New identity Executive leaders driving change Market-oriented activity Change becoming the new normal Maintaining trust Sweeping collaboration Strategic communication Navigating challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational identity Increasingly change-oriented Permission to fail Evaluating and anticipating the context for higher education Collaboration Intentional communication Designated resources and structures Challenges with implementing and timing change

challenged, when leaders realize previously successful values and approaches have become less relevant, or when people become aware that competing perspectives have

emerged (Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). An adaptive challenge is defined as a situation in which a significant gap exists for individuals or organizations between desired and bold aspirations while confronted with difficult realities (Heifetz et al., 2009). Because an adaptive challenge is momentous enough that current capabilities will not allow resolution, transformation is required (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Resolving adaptive challenges requires creating new knowledge, skills, and tools while working on a solution (Wagner & Kegan, 2006). The common characteristics of the adaptive change model are that it challenges routines, requires new learning, includes broad involvement from people within the organization, and resolves difficult problems (Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004).

An additional source of literature featured in this chapter is Kotter's (1996) theory, which describes eight stages through which organizations must proceed to successfully implement a significant change project. Kotter's theory was described in Chapter 2 as a planned change model and is highlighted in this chapter due to the alignment of this theory with the findings. Kotter's eight states are (a) establishing a sense of urgency, (b) creating the guiding coalition, (c) developing a vision and strategy, (d) communicating the change vision, (e) empowering broad-based action, (f) generating short-term wins, (g) consolidating gains and producing more change, and (h) anchoring new approaches in the culture. Kotter's model assumes that implementing change requires distinct attention to each stage, consistent effort for several years, and high-quality leadership.

The purpose of this research was to study the environmental characteristics of exemplar institutions that have consistently created and implemented adaptive solutions

to significant challenges. To identify and evaluate these characteristics, the environment (a contributing factor to the organizational culture) of two campuses was studied. This chapter provides a brief overview of the data analysis process for this research followed by a comparative analysis of the themes identified at Program College and Technology University during each stage of change. Throughout the chapter, the findings are described in relation to the literature, exploring areas of alignment and distinction.

Process of Data Analysis

The recommended approach by Yin (2014) for the analysis of case study data was to conduct a cross-case synthesis when more than one case is included in the research. For this study, each case was studied individually prior to conducting a comparative analysis. In this chapter, cross-case synthesis is applied to explore the distinctive environmental characteristics at each institution present during specific phases of change. Cross-case synthesis allows the development of robust findings and analysis because of the breadth of data collected; additionally, the implications and conclusions of the study are enhanced through applying this methodology (Yin, 2014).

The first stage of data analysis for this study included multiple reviews of interview recordings and transcripts, along with field notes and memos completed during the research. During the second stage of analysis, initial coding was conducted with use of NVIVO 10, a software system that supports the work of researchers in collecting, organizing, and analyzing unstructured data. Utilizing NVIVO 10, I categorized related words and phrases into unit groupings. During the third stage of analysis, I identified clusters of meanings that could be developed into themes and iteratively developed descriptions to capture the essential meaning of the data, resulting in the themes

described in Chapter 4. For this chapter, the themes most prominent in the data from each institution were selected and analyzed with a goal of clearly describing defining characteristics in the organizational environments during the phases of change. These prominent topics are identified as comparison themes in the remainder of this chapter.

Drawing from a review of the literature related to change models in higher education, some characteristics identified in this research could have been anticipated. Although this research identified some areas of overlap with the literature, additional environmental characteristics recognized at one or both institutions also suggest unique elements within a higher education environment that produces ongoing change. The distinctive experiences described at each institution demonstrate the phases of change have some components related to an institution's history, setting, and organizational culture.

In the remainder of this chapter, the comparative analysis of themes is organized in the phases of *motivating change*, *implementing change*, and *sustaining change*. The following sections describe selected themes for each phase present in the data at each institution. These themes have been integrated to describe the comparable environmental characteristics identified at the two sites. Additionally, important distinctions between the institutions are identified and explored when relevant. Throughout this chapter, the analysis focuses on how the environmental characteristics contributed to the ability to produce adaptive change.

Motivating Change

The data for this study demonstrated the change efforts were initiated by generating broad levels of motivation throughout the institution. This first phase in the

process of motivating change was evaluated with a particular focus on how momentum was produced to create initiatives and begin movement toward implementation. This section describes how Program College and Technology University were able to initiate change efforts despite the typical difficulties encountered at higher education institutions. Table 2 includes the themes identified at each institution. Additionally, the comparison themes prominent in both cases are analyzed. The comparison themes include a sense of urgency, executive leadership, and responding to market forces. The theme of high trust, more prominent at Program College, is explored.

Sense of Urgency

Each institution generated a sense of urgency to motivate change during an abbreviated amount of time. The centrality of urgency to the change process was evident at each institution and aligns with related literature. In Kotter's (1996) process of change, creating a sense of urgency is the first of eight stages. He argued that a sense of urgency is necessary to move enough people within an organization past complacency and provide a reason or purpose for action. In a subsequent publication also related to organizational change, Kotter (2008) identified urgency as the single most important factor in whether a change initiative will succeed or fail. Kotter argued that the ability to continually maintain a sense of urgency is becoming increasingly important for organizations to meet demands in a changing society, despite numerous reinforcements within organizations to retain the status quo. Although higher education is frequently criticized for difficulty in generating urgency to change, this characteristic was clearly present at Program College and Technology University.

Table 2

Comparison of Themes in Motivating Change Phase

Program College	Technology University
Desire to survive	Hiring innovative people
Recognizing a missed opportunity	Developing a climate for innovation
Executive leaders as change catalysts	Ideas emerging from within the organization
Creating an awareness of context	Understanding technology and impacts
Trust	Leaders responding to opportunity
Communicating a need to change	
Difficult decisions	
Resistance and detractors	

Comparison Themes:

- Sense of urgency
- Executive leadership
- Responding to market forces

Distinctive Theme to Program College:

- High trust

The impetus for how and why change occurred at each institution differed somewhat between the two case studies. At Program College it appeared the sense of urgency motivating change was a fear for the institution’s survival. Technology University developed a vision to pursue an innovative initiative with a sense of urgency to act quickly before the opportunity passed. The data from this study demonstrated that a sense of urgency can be based on a continuum of fear and opportunity with tensions at both ends. People at Program College were motivated by fear of what would happen if change did not occur rapidly. Simultaneously, administrators, faculty, and staff maintained a hope in future opportunities for the institution. The change at Technology

University was motivated primarily by an opportunity that visionary people observed and created a picture of what the institution could accomplish. The urgency to act was also based on an understanding that a technology initiative would require swift action if the institution was to be on the leading edge. People were beginning to develop a sense that action was necessary, and failure to change might lead to negative results in the future, creating a level of motivation by fear.

Fear motivating change. The primary sense of urgency demonstrated at Program College was based on fear about the institution's future due to a fiscal crisis. During this period, there were serious questions among administrators, faculty, and staff as to whether the institution would survive. The implications of the crisis were obvious due to reductions in personnel, program closures, flat wages, and bypassing retirement contributions. These experiences coalesced into a sense of fear about what would happen to the institution if significant change did not occur. People were motivated to act to improve the viability of the institution, and leaders contributed by identifying possible plans for change. Kotter (2008) explained that leaders can help people recognize a crisis can be beneficial in allowing an organization to quickly craft new or adjusted strategies. Additionally, according to Heifetz and Linsky (2002), one of the ways to stimulate change within an organization is to draw attention to current and hard issues. Leaders should ensure focus is maintained on these issues so people throughout the organization feel a level of responsibility to work on solutions. These views align with the approach taken at Program College in which people were encouraged to consider radical new approaches to improve the institution's current and future financial health.

In higher education settings, an economic crisis can often spur change more powerfully than mission-focused dialogue (Zemsky et al., 2005). Some of the activities implemented at Program College, including reducing personnel and discontinuing programs, reflected a market responsiveness described by Zemsky et al. (2005) as “growth by substitution” (p. 67). In making these types of decisions, organizational leaders identified high-priority programs requiring continued investment, made possible by reducing or eliminating the costs of low-priority programs.

External conditions, including a national and regional economic downturn, increasing competitiveness for enrolling students, and internal budget realities of high tuition dependency, provided a sense the status quo could not continue. The data from this study reflected a sense within the organization that these factors were not going to change, and hoping for different results at the institution would not be adequate. The fear for survival at the institution was strong enough to instigate an urgency to challenge assumptions about higher education and try new approaches. According to Heifetz and Linsky (2002), challenging assumptions is an essential part of the adaptive change process. Leaders must be willing to ask difficult questions that address values, beliefs, and practices within an organization. Because people need time to process information or questions that challenge their assumptions, this process typically does not yield immediate results. However, in the case of Program College, the nature of the crisis incentivized people to evaluate assumptions at a quicker rate. This motivation was enhanced due to a commitment at the institution to honestly evaluate current realities confronting the institution.

Acknowledging realities. Institutional leaders at Program College helped people understand the urgency to change by communicating clearly about the realities confronting the institution. Administrators provided frequent and detailed updates about national and regional economic issues that impacted the institution and current and future students. The challenges confronting the institution were presented as ones that formed shifting dynamics that would impact the context for higher education into the future. In recognizing local realities, Program College administrators extended comparisons beyond higher education to detail the changing dynamics in other fields. Attention was directed to how similar factors, such as technology and changing consumer demands, had impacted the newspaper and automobile industries, particularly within the region.

This approach of acknowledging realities was also demonstrated at Technology University, where the leadership had focused attention on issues anticipated to occur. In particular, administrators, faculty, and staff were forecasting ways in which technology was changing student expectations as well as the teaching and learning process. The commitment to communicate about the status of the institution with employees is recognized as a “best practice” in organizational leadership literature. In their work on execution within organizations, Bossidy, Charan, and Burck (2002) argued that consistently exposing employees to the reality of the current situation is a necessity for operating at a high level of efficiency. Additionally, leaders must demonstrate a commitment to act on current and changing opportunities and challenges.

In his study of highly successful organizations, Collins (2001) found a deep and consistent attentiveness to current facts and realities, no matter how difficult the situation. It appeared that Program College leaders, in particular, were able to generate a sense of

urgency for action rather than anxiety that could have paralyzed a response. Kotter (1996) noted the important distinction between anxiety that results in resistance to change contrasted with urgency that prompts people to work toward and even sacrifice for new approaches. Along with fear driving urgency, Program College demonstrated a sense that an opportunity existed for the institution to change its current position.

Missed opportunity. Employees at Program College, along with recognizing a need to change for survival, identified an opportunity to change to fulfill the institution's mission and uniquely serve students. This perspective was made more acute through acknowledging a previous missed opportunity in recent years when there had been a chance to expand non-traditional enrollment. However, because faculty had not supported that initiative, another university in the region had pursued the same approach and dramatically invested in non-traditional programs. During the motivating change phase, executive leaders consistently reminded faculty and staff about the significant success now being experienced at that nearby university. This example was presented enough times that faculty and staff recognized they could not bypass another chance for significant change. Faculty who had experienced the missed opportunity spoke in favor of embracing changes now so the same mistake would not be repeated.

In their work on organizational change, Kegan and Lahey (2009) explained that a primary motivation for people to change is a fear that retaining the status quo would be harmful to themselves or others about whom they care. This approach to change was evident at Program College because faculty and staff recognized an opportunity to act to continue the important mission of their institution. The factors of fear for survival along

with an opportunity to change combined so people throughout Program College developed an urgency to act.

Vision to change. The urgency for change at Technology University was based on a vision to enhance the teaching and learning experience through implementing a significant technological initiative. The creative idea began with a professor and then was fostered by a standing committee of administrators and professors who focused on technological impacts of teaching and learning. An openness to evaluate potentially innovative approaches to teaching and learning, particularly incorporating technology, is a distinctive feature within higher education (Zemsky et al., 2005). The vision of a new educational experience for faculty and students contributed to the sense of urgency at Technology University. This source of motivation for change relates to the work of Kotter (1996), who described vision as a “picture of the future” (p. 68) with explanation for why people should work toward this new approach. The people involved with the change process at Technology University were able to craft a compelling idea that attracted involvement from additional people over time. Kotter described the benefits of a compelling vision as providing clarity for the direction of a change effort, motivating activity toward the goal, and coordinating the efforts of people throughout the organization.

Faculty members and administrators at Technology University recognized a need to act quickly because of the speed with which technological advances were occurring in society. Because adequate numbers of administrators and professors had been engaged with developments in technology and higher education best practices, a clear understanding about the need for a sense of urgency existed on campus. As discussions

about necessary resources occurred, administrative leaders responded rapidly by making budgetary adjustments to support the initiative. Executives had been looking for opportunities to change the student experience in anticipation of shifting societal trends. According to Heifetz and Linsky (2002), reminding people about the vision and purpose of an initiative is necessary to offset the angst that often results from change. Communicating about the possible future, especially by identifying tangible advancements, helps people view the current difficulties of a change process as worthwhile. Kotter (1996) also identified the benefit of having a strong vision provides motivation for people to join in change efforts and be willing to make sacrifices to reach the intended goals. The data collected from Technology University reflected the institution's ability to translate a compelling vision of the future into a sense of urgency.

Urgency based on vision. The experiences described by participants at Technology University demonstrated a sense of urgency can be generated from aspirational goals. The impetus for change was based on a desire to attain a compelling vision of transforming the teaching and learning experience of both faculty and students. Additionally, there was an increasing awareness that with technological advances, economic shifts, and changing demographics, there would be a need for change at the institutional level to attain financial viability in the future. Participants at Technology University communicated an increasing understanding that higher education institutions would have to change to meet new demands during the subsequent stages of implementing and sustaining the envisioned changes. In their work on adaptive change, Heifetz et al. (2009) emphasized the need for shared purpose in organizational settings.

Yet identifying and coalescing around agreed-upon purposes can be difficult within an institution due to differing individual perspectives.

The courage and perseverance required for commitment to shared purposes can provide people with inspiration, energy, and direction during the change process. Heifetz (1994) stated that leaders must be willing to continually evaluate the purposes of an organization along with current opportunities. This analysis process by leaders allows aligning shared values with shifting external dynamics. These elements of adaptive change were evident at Technology University through faculty, staff, and administrators sharing a purpose to enhance the teaching and learning experience and evaluating opportunities for change.

Motivations for urgency. The varied approaches for generating a sense of urgency at each institution highlight the continuum for motivation that existed, based on elements of opportunity and/or fear. At both organizations, fear and opportunity were part of creating a sense of urgency, with one of these motivating factors featured more prominently. The approach at Technology University focused on the opportunity to engage with emerging realities and attempt to anticipate problems. In contrast, Program College was addressing current realities and a need to fix problems during this stage. In his description of the stages of change, Kotter (1996) provided numerous examples by which organizational leaders can increase the sense of urgency. The potential for developing a sense of urgency due to crisis is highlighted, including the suggestion for creating an artificial crisis. Nearly all the suggested reasons focus on fear-based methods, even to the extent of creating a crisis. The data for this research demonstrated the possibility for multiple elements generating urgency within a higher education

institution. Ultimately, a true sense of urgency, according to Kotter (2008), emphasizes that action is needed immediately, displacing complacency and activity not linked to critical work. Both institutions were able to create enough motivation to push significant projects forward, with executive leaders playing a significant role in the change process.

Executive Leadership

Motivating change efforts at each institution included key efforts by executive leaders at Program College and Technology University. Administrators at the institutions demonstrated different approaches to guiding the change process during the motivating change phase, yet made essential contributions. At Program College, change was motivated by an active administration, particularly the president and provost. Although faculty and staff participated in the process, major decisions were made at the executive level, reflecting a top-down approach. Participants from Program College who were interviewed primarily credited presidential leadership for the changes that have been successfully implemented in recent years. At Technology University, executive leaders cultivated and encouraged an environment that was conducive to innovation. Administrators had emphasized hiring innovative people for several years, thus developing a pool of employees who were open to change. Participants noted that the environment of the institution during this stage allowed innovation to develop from the bottom up.

Top down. It was evident from the data that much of the change accomplished at Program College resulted from a top-down approach by executive leaders. The change process was initiated by administrators who desired to act quickly and reverse what they perceived to be a crisis situation. Ideas were presented by executives and especially

driven by Dr. Smith (provost at the time), who was characterized as a creative force on campus. The perspective communicated by participants was that Dr. Smith generated a high volume of the ideas developed and implemented by faculty and staff throughout the organization. Additionally, Dr. Johnson (president at the time) provided support and explained to the organization why such drastic changes were necessary. This successful partnership corroborates the findings of Hofstede et al. (2010) who researched the impact of cultural similarities and differences within organizations. They observed that when an innovative change was presented within an organization in which everyone has access to power holders, it was particularly helpful to have two leaders assume different roles – for example, one being a supportive power holder while the other held the expertise to diagnose the challenge and appropriate solution. Participants’ descriptions of the working relationship between Dr. Johnson and Dr. Smith as modeling this leadership approach during the motivating change phase.

Prior to the institutional crisis, faculty committees had been tasked with leading change, but had determined that implementing strategic change would not be possible without significant resources. Due to the nature of the crisis confronting the organization, there was a shift in power from faculty governance through committees to an administratively driven approach. The organizational crisis generated enough cause for the faculty to allow this shift in power, given the widespread recognition that the lengthy faculty governance model would not allow adequate change at a rapid pace. Although there were mixed responses among professors about this loss of faculty control, there was general agreement that a clear directive from the executive level was necessary; reportedly, a majority of faculty agreed or preferred not to resist.

Bottom up. During the years leading to the technology initiative, administrators at Technology University focused on cultivating an infrastructure that supported innovation and developing personnel capacity. This approach resulted in an environment in which a significant change initiative could originate from the bottom and work up through the organization. Faculty interview participants reflected an understanding that new ideas could be developed and presented to administrators. Executive leaders did not create the ideas for the technology initiative but had contributed to an environment conducive for change and demonstrated support for selected new initiatives. This leadership approach aligns with the literature on adaptive change. For example, Heifetz (1994) advocated the importance of leaders creating an environment in which people throughout an organization are mobilized to address significant problems. In higher education specifically, Kezar (2014) noted that researchers have devoted increasing attention to grassroots leadership styles during recent decades. The potential for leading change is thereby expanded beyond positions of authority to include anyone in an organization who is facilitating, creating, or contributing to change efforts.

An initial step taken at Technology University toward cultivating an innovative infrastructure was emphasizing the hiring of administrators, faculty, and staff with a mindset and skills conducive to change. Administrators began looking for people with a bent toward innovation and started training faculty and staff throughout the organization to look for creative characteristics within the hiring process. In addition, efforts were pursued to enhance the training and skills of employees. For example, the president and other executives intentionally participated in professional conferences and other development opportunities to generate increased understanding of best practices. In

previous years, executives had approved the creation of a faculty development center, with an emphasis on teaching and learning. Because of these efforts to cultivate an innovative environment, a substantial number of innovative people were in place who felt empowered to generate and pursue new ideas.

Additionally, executive leaders cultivated an environment that was conducive to innovation by modeling and emphasizing flexibility in approaches to teaching and learning. There was a developing sense that experimentation was encouraged, and failure would be tolerated and provide learning opportunities. Leaders at Technology University invested ample resources to encourage faculty to experiment with new pedagogical approaches. Such practices are consistent with the perspective of Heifetz et al. (2009), who noted that honoring risk taking and experimentation is critical for fostering an environment in which adaptive change regularly occurs. It is especially important for organizational leaders to recognize and reward learning from experiments that fail. As people increase their comfort level with new approaches as well as learning from failure, an organization will be able to execute on creative ideas. The varied approaches to motivating change at Program College and Technology University provide an opportunity to consider the power dynamics within institutions that have an environment that embraces change and innovation.

Power dynamics. The data from this study demonstrated two styles of leadership in relation to change, top down and bottom up, which raises the issue of power dynamics (i.e., the people who are involved with making decisions and moving initiatives forward in the institutions). The leadership approaches of executives in this study reveal the unique nature of power dynamics within the higher education field. During this phase of

motivating change, for example, Program College moved relatively quickly from faculty control of change to the administration largely owning the change process. Participants reported the situation was widely recognized as being dire enough to support the shift in power, even though the faculty's role in shared governance was minimized. In comparison, the faculty voice at Technology University was strong and provided direction for the technology initiative that changed the trajectory of the institution.

Administratively driven. Participants described the changes at Program College as initiated by the work of administrators. The crisis situation created a scenario of uncertainty and fear, and administrators were prepared to provide significant leadership at the time. In relation to adaptive change, Heifetz (1994) explained that a crisis can provide increased power to those in authority positions because most people in an organization are looking for resolution to the situation; therefore, action taken by organizational leaders is accepted because they are taking responsibility and thus reducing disequilibrium within the organization. This description fits the experiences described at Program College as employees appreciated the strategic direction-setting provided by administrators during a difficult period.

One of the reasons faculty may have been inclined to entrust the leadership of change initiatives to administrators is the increased responsibilities executives across higher education have assumed in recent decades. Zemsky et al. (2005) described the common development of administrative specialty in areas including enrollment management and student services. Simultaneously, faculty have deferred several areas of institutional operations to administrators, instead choosing to focus on research, publication, and teaching. The approval from faculty for this type of scenario frequently

included implicit approval because of the opportunity to discontinue administrative tasks, such as advising.

Participants at Program College described the perception that there was an expectation for all faculty and staff to support the comprehensive change initiative. People who were not fully on board chose to transition from the institution or were encouraged to seek employment elsewhere. These steps align with the research of Hofstede et al. (2010) in relation to changing an organization's culture, which requires difficult measures that address structures, process, and personnel. Changes to structure may necessitate closing or creating a department, reconfiguring workflow, and/or physically moving departments or personnel. Process changes can impact procedures, controls, efficiencies, automation, and communication. Personnel adjustments frequently have an impact on hiring and promotion policies. Each of these elements was in place at Program College during the fiscal crisis.

Although the leadership at Program College significantly altered the role of faculty governance, there were also steps that increased the clarity of voice for faculty. Well-defined opportunities for participation were provided for the faculty to engage with the planning of emerging initiatives. Executive leaders attempted to infuse faculty with informal power and a strong voice through each phase by efforts that included a new committee on faculty focused on the experience of professors, frequent surveys, and open communication both at meetings and with individuals. These efforts are consistent with recommendations by Heifetz and Linsky (2002) that leaders should work closely with allies as well as opponents during the adaptive change process. It is essential for leaders to understand varying perspectives on an initiative and to devote attention and

compassion to people who oppose the process. This approach of valuing the faculty voice was also evident at Technology University.

Faculty voice. The power dynamics at Technology University reflected an environment in which the faculty maintained a significant voice in the direction of the institution. A professor was the originator of the technology initiative and maintained involvement while other faculty joined in the process. Administrators supported this initiative through early encouragement of developing the idea and identifying resources as the project moved toward implementation. In the adaptive change model, Heifetz (1994) addressed the power dynamics of change by stating that organizational leaders are typically confronted with multiple adaptive challenges at the same time, with each issue requiring a different strategy. The task for leaders is to diagnose “ripe” (p. 116) issues for change due to adequate attention and urgency within the organization. In comparison, “unripe” (p. 116) issues require further exposure so people within the organization recognize the need for change.

There have been increasing efforts by administrators to lead significant change at Technology University in recent years. One administrator described a continual “dance” between faculty and administration, with executive leaders attempting to better understand when to push innovation and change initiatives. There is recognition that this “dance” requires ongoing attempts by executives to gauge the level of change that can be absorbed within the culture. As executives have increased the number of change initiatives being supported, a high level of responsiveness from people within the organization has emerged. This approach aligns with the adaptive change literature, such as the recommendation by Heifetz and Linsky (2002) for leaders to be discerning about

the appropriate level of urgency within an organization, given the normal tendency of individuals to maintain the status quo. Urgency should adequately provide motivation without paralyzing action due to fear. The power dynamics have been shifting at both institutions, yet for different reasons, motivation remains for pursuing change and innovation.

Shifting dynamics. This research demonstrated varied approaches to power within an institution as well as the roles of faculty and administrators with change initiatives. Motivating change can be accomplished in different ways in relation to power dynamics, even within the same institution. The data from Program College seemed to indicate that when an institution is in extreme need, executive leadership has more latitude to assume the power of decision-making. In this scenario, change was initiated by executives while bypassing some of the traditional practices of faculty governance. At the same time, the voices of faculty were intentionally incorporated in ways other than through formal structures by ensuring dialogue and input. An alternative approach to the change process was evident at Technology University. On that campus, the faculty voice was a recognized part of decision-making, although executives did not allow the governance system to hamper needed change. A tenuous “dance” was in place between faculty and administrators that allowed change to move forward.

Ultimately, administrative action was necessary for implementing initiatives at both institutions. Bolman and Gallos (2011) explained that administrators at higher education institutions are confronted with increasing demands to initiate change due to the various pressures for accountability, financial stability, and market-orientation. Implementing change can be challenging when navigating faculty governance systems,

depending on the level of power and autonomy evident within each campus setting. Executive leaders can often find themselves in difficult situations due to conflicting expectations and concerns from faculty and external constituents. The administrators at Program College and Technology University appeared to exhibit an acute awareness of these issues, along with strategies for constructively addressing the changing landscape of U.S. higher education.

Both institutions demonstrated adjusting power dynamics with regard to change initiatives during the phases of implementing and sustaining change. As Program College proceeded through subsequent phases, there appeared to be an increasing number of changes generated as bottom-up ideas. As Technology University has transitioned through phases of change, there have been increasing examples of top-down leadership in relation to change. Several participants at Technology University described the current status as approximately half of the change initiatives beginning from the “grass roots” with the other half generated by administrators. With the dynamics for higher education shifting in recent years, participants in both case studies noted the need for increasing change and innovation to survive as an institution. These transitions seem to demonstrate an understanding among executives that a monolithic approach to change will not always work. Administrators have attempted to provide appropriate guidance for change initiatives that fit the need at the time. In both case study institutions, executive leaders were willing to act rapidly to meet changing demands.

Bias for action. Executive leaders at each institution demonstrated a bias for action by moving initiatives forward when opportunities were presented, showing resolve in the pursuit of change, and displaying support for experimentation. In their work on

excellence in organizations, Peters and Waterman (2004) described a “bias for action” (p. 121) as a critical component for leaders. This orientation toward action helps counteract the common tendency toward the status quo and conformity within an organization. Additionally, in his work on executing in organizational environments, Belsky (2012) noted the importance of leaders having a “relentless bias toward action” (p. 32) as they work toward implementing creative change. Without this type of approach, good ideas may be forgotten or left to chance due to a lack of intentional follow up. When organizational leaders can foster an environment oriented toward action, the prospects of building on creative ideas is enhanced. The efforts of executive leaders aligned with these descriptions of bias for change contributed to an environment in which creative ideas could be developed.

At Program College, administrators (and particularly Dr. Smith) consistently set timelines that were challenging to meet. Accelerated deadlines maintained a focus on the change initiative and incentivized action. At Technology University, administrative leaders demonstrated a desire to expeditiously pursue the technology initiative. Executives described recognizing an opportunity and deciding to “draw a line” by moving forward with the initiative. Relatedly, Peters and Waterman (2004) explained that the strategy of segmenting the work of an initiative into smaller tasks with deadlines promotes action by others in the organization. In each case, decisions were made with adequate information but were not stalled due to hesitation, uncertainty, or a need to understand all potential implications. Belsky (2012) described the necessity of teams engaging in activities before knowing the exact results. This concept of “premature action” (p. 74) encourages acting early enough in the process so people can fail and learn

from the attempt to bring creative ideas to life. According to Belsky, an additional benefit of early action is that people are not overly committed to one approach prior to seeing how it actually works. This method necessitates a willingness to adapt or discontinue projects based on data or initial results.

Administrators at each institution exhibited resolve with this bias for action because the developed initiatives required significant shifts in the direction of the institution and included new approaches in the higher education field. Participants explained that change in higher education often replicates what has been successful at other institutions; however, in these two cases, executive leaders were willing to pursue ideas that had not been implemented elsewhere. This approach required a level of courage because leaders made difficult decisions along the way to press forward. Decisions at Program College included cutting expenses, closing programs, and laying off personnel while also investing in a new model for higher education. These choices generated angst in a tight-knit campus community, given the innovative approach required substantial work yet was based on little evidence of similar approaches working at other institutions. The approach at Technology University proposed new methods related to teaching and learning and thus involved a level of uncertainty about how well the experiment would actually work. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) explained that at the beginning of a potential adaptive change, leaders are confronted with varying levels of risk depending on the significance of the project and the amount of learning required. Many leaders avoid adaptive challenges because of the associated risk, unknown results, and anticipated resistance. However, leaders at each institution demonstrated the capacity for addressing these adaptive challenges, despite the potential perils.

The bias for action demonstrated by executive leaders at these institutions is unusual in the higher education field. Postsecondary institutions are often criticized for moving too slowly due to the deliberative nature of the academy (Blumenstyk, 2014a; Selingo, 2013; Zemsky, 2013). Critics have noted that significant change or innovation is rare within colleges and universities, despite operating in a rapidly changing context (Kotter, 1996). In fact, leaders must often act quickly and have a bias for action that includes a level of restlessness (Peters & Waterman, 2004). Leaders with this mindset value action and focus on identifying potential champions for experimentation, characteristics evident at both institutions.

Leaders with a bias for action are willing to try new approaches and learn from the process when failure occurs (Peters & Waterman, 2004). Experimentation most often occurs through prototyping so people can determine the potential of an experiment at a relatively low cost. Leaders with a bias for action who have cultivated an environment that values experimentation have been described as “nurturing good tries, allowing modest failures, labeling experiments after the fact as successes, leading the cheers, and quietly guiding the diffusion process” (Peters & Waterman, 2004, p. 150). Executive leaders demonstrated an affinity for experimentation and a desire to learn from failures, allowing adaptation of initiatives throughout each phase. These characteristics were especially driven by leadership from the presidential level.

Presidential leadership. At each institution, the president was perceived as a key contributor to environments conducive to change and innovation. Participants described the president on their campus as creating and communicating vision, cultivating an environment that promoted change and innovation and establishing measures of

accountability. An intriguing similarity emerged in relation to presidential leadership at each institution, in that the change process was initiated toward the end of the tenure of a long-serving president who was viewed as having a high level of credibility. As each institution proceeded through the phases of motivating, implementing, and sustaining change as described in this study, a new president was selected. Program College and Technology University each selected an internal candidate who assumed the presidency at a difficult time due to the national fiscal crisis. This strategy of hiring internally for a chief executive officer aligned with Collins's (2011) research about what he termed "Level 5 leaders" (p. 31), meaning outstanding leaders who exhibit both "personal humility and professional will" (p. 20). Collins argued this type of Level 5 leader is a necessity for an organization to reach peak performance but that hiring an external leader as a change agent is negatively correlated with an organization achieving greatness. In each case study, descriptions of the role of the previous and current presidents emphasized the key role and contribution of these individuals to the change process that had occurred on campus. Also, because the current presidents had been hired as internal candidates, they were described as central figures through the full change process.

The presidential transitions demonstrated striking similarities, as each former president was perceived as demonstrating tremendous pastoral care for people within the organization. Participants at Program College expressed a sentiment that the transition to the new president occurred smoothly because the previous president had entrusted much of the change efforts to his successor. Adjusting to a new president at Technology University appeared to require additional time due to the differences in skill sets and approach, yet participants noted that the previous president had supported his successor

by providing significant leadership opportunities. Participants at each institution viewed the new president as having keen business acumen, although the individual's prior extended career path had been in higher education. Additionally, the new president at each institution was described as being visionary, with a strength of communicating the institution's vision widely and passionately. Finally, at both institutions the new president has worked intentionally to implement a stronger emphasis on accountability throughout the institution by defining standards and expectations for execution.

Despite the advancements demonstrated at each institution, both presidents expressed a belief that not enough has been accomplished at the institution; in fact, both expressed the desire to implement innovation at a quicker pace. This expectation for continuing advancement toward excellence is reflected in Collins's (2011) research about Level 5 leaders. Collins stated that one characteristic of these types of leaders is a strong resolve and determination to accomplish results and move the company toward greatness. One of the contributing factors for this drive to change and innovate at a quicker pace is a deep understanding of the external factors confronting each institution, an awareness evident in the president's leadership at each institution.

Responding to Market Forces

The environment at each institution during the motivating change phase encouraged individuals to learn about the regional and national market forces impacting higher education. Executive leaders intentionally communicated about relevant factors and, over time, employees at all levels of the organizations demonstrated an awareness of the current pressures on higher education. The market forces impacting Program College and Technology University reflect elements of adaptive challenges described by Heifetz

et al. (2009). An adaptive challenge is defined as a scenario in which a significant gap exists between desired and bold aspirations while confronted with difficult realities. Assuming adaptive change requires people to confront difficult realities and conflict rather than avoiding such issues (Heifetz, 1994). Heifetz et al. explained that leaders navigating the adaptive change process must help educate organizational members about elements of a challenge so they can identify and interpret the need for change. According to these scholars, those potentially impacted by the change effort then become more willing to accept necessary learning for new methods along with any potential losses.

Ultimately, people at each institution recognized potential opportunities for successful change and demonstrated a willingness to take action. Awareness of the national and regional picture of higher education formed the foundation for change initiatives. In their work on aligning responses to market realities with institutional missions, Zemsky et al. (2005) argued that due to the shifting expectations for higher education, particularly related to providing credentialing students to enter or maintain middle-class status, colleges and universities must become more responsive to market forces to be viable. This reality for higher education is similar to most other industries, requiring a need to “evolve management systems that work, that yield leaner, more agile, certainly more focused, organizations” (Zemsky et al., 2005, p. 30). For many faculty members, developing a market-driven approach can be discomfoting because of preferences to focus on academic work alone. Thus, achieving an environment in which the majority of faculty recognize the need for directing attention toward market forces is an important dimension of the process. The responsiveness to market forces, while maintaining the institutional mission, was evident at both institutions as administrators,

faculty, and staff reflected an understanding of the multiple factors impacting both higher education in general and the specific institution.

Communication about market forces. Intentional efforts were undertaken at each institution to communicate broadly about national and regional factors impacting higher education and the individual institutions. At Program College, executive leaders regularly spoke at monthly employee meetings to enhance the awareness of employees about issues that impacted the institution. Significant time was devoted to discussion of economic issues, especially during the institution's crisis period, to build understanding of the need for action that would allow the institution to survive. Topics that were researched and explained centered on family incomes, unemployment, and other fiscal indicators at the national and local levels. Informed knowledge of market forces at Program College was used to explain a need for serving current and prospective students and their families, thus making a connection to a need for action. At the same time, institutional leaders retained a focus on the organization's mission with a willingness to change the methods by which the institution operated. This characteristic at Program College contributed to building a sense of urgency; creating an understanding of context is a critical component of creating a sense of urgency as described by Kotter (2008). In summary, institutional leaders at Program College were able to craft a compelling explanation of external factors contributing to a necessity for change, thereby enhancing campus-wide ownership of the proposed innovative changes.

At Technology University, although understanding the surrounding context during the motivating change phase was demonstrated more sporadically, there were pockets of people with a clear picture of changing trends and ideas for how to respond.

Key contributors, including administrators and the professors who initiated the idea for the technology initiative, demonstrated high levels of awareness of trends in technology, student demographics, and potential implications for teaching and learning. The concepts for the initiative emerged as a result of faculty, administrators, and staff consistently engaging with national and regional topics, including technology and student learning. During later phases described in the case study, the awareness of context was expanded, as institutional leaders took intentional steps to collect and disseminate information about contextual issues.

Both institutions applied the strategy of writing and disseminating a white paper with information that defined the current context and presented the need for making significant changes. Program College assigned a group to write a report that described regional challenges and the national climate for higher education, along with providing recommendations during the motivating change phase. Technology University applied this strategy during the second phase of implementing change as a way of expanding subsequent adaptive change and innovation throughout the institution. The Technology University white paper addressed the higher education business model and national climate. Leaders at each institution made the case that the higher education field was changing by making comparisons to other industries that have been impacted by technological advances in recent years.

Willingness to act. During the motivating change phase, both institutions catalyzed an understanding of market forces into a willingness to act. Program College intentionally and regularly communicated information about relevant context throughout the organization to catalyze action. Technology University cultivated an environment in

which enough administrators and professors were aware of regional and national issues to craft an innovative initiative; in both cases, campus members were willing to change and attempt creative approaches. This characteristic differs from what commonly occurs in higher education settings, particularly institutions confronted with a financial crisis, as organizational leaders tend to prioritize preserving current operations and jobs rather than pursue creative changes (Zemsky et al., 2005). Understanding market forces in these case studies did not constrain the pursuit of creative approaches. Both institutions did not simply copy other programs but rather developed their own approaches and forged new ground.

High Trust

One final theme that was prominent during the motivating change phase was a relatively high level of trust among administrators, faculty, and staff for working together on a significant and comprehensive change plan. This level of trust was prominent at Program College, while present but not as strongly emphasized at Technology University. Participants at Technology University described trust as a helpful element, but in a more peripheral manner than the foundational manner in which Program College participants talked about trust. Trust may have been taken for granted at Technology University during the motivating change phase because of the key role of a long-term president and calling for change based on compelling vision rather than institutional survival. At Technology University, there had been a decline of trust following a presidential transition during the implementation and sustaining phases; this decline was identified as a significant challenge and was addressed through intentional outreach to faculty and staff.

Administrators, faculty, and staff described trust as a necessary component for the significant transformation that occurred at Program College. As part of their work on organizational change, Kegan and Lahey (2009) researched the following characteristics that contribute to the development of trust: (a) respect for the important contribution of multiple people to reach high-quality outcomes, (b) belief in other people's capability and desire to fulfill responsibilities, (c) care for people on professional and personal levels, and (d) consistency between actions and communication. These characteristics were described by Program College participants in varying ways. Particular emphasis was placed on mutual respect among administrators and faculty, care for people and especially for the well-being of the organization, and the perceived integrity of administrative leaders.

Efforts of executive leaders. Participants at Program College described their perception that administrators significantly contributed to the trust level within the institution, which allowed progress on the change initiative. Executive leaders expressed and demonstrated a commitment to developing trust, particularly with faculty, and took specific steps to demonstrate respect for the work of professors. In addition, trust increased by administrators expressing value for employees, with particular attention devoted to increasing salaries as the financial position of the institution improved. Faculty communicated a high level of trust for administrators who were attempting to initiate change, despite the crisis status. Several participants described a high level of confidence in executive leaders due to the character and credibility of President Johnson and Provost Smith.

Faculty and staff viewed administrators as having the best interests of the institution and people as motivators. Heifetz et al. (2009) maintained that power and influence are most impactful within an organization when people trust authority figures to serve the goals of a broad group of people rather than just those in leadership positions. Simultaneously, leaders must be able to push against the expectations of people who grant that authority and trust to truly achieve adaptive change. Heifetz (1994) argued that people's trust in authority relationships is dependent on predictability and consistency as demonstrated in values and skills, particularly in relation to problem-solving.

In his work on organizational success, Covey (2006) identified trust as a central factor that influences both the pace of work and organizational costs. He described trust as the "hidden variable" (p. 20) within organizations and stated that the credibility of leaders directly contributes to people's trust level. One of the fastest ways for executives to develop trust is to confront reality and communicate honestly about challenging issues. According to Covey, people view willingness to address difficult issues as a leader demonstrating authenticity and being genuine. Additionally, Bossidy et al.'s (2002) work on organizational execution concluded that authentic communication is an essential element for building and maintaining trust within an organization. The communication approach by Dr. Smith and Dr. Johnson demonstrated the ability to build trust through honest and authentic discussion of the institution's situation.

It appeared from the data that executive leaders benefited from a relatively high level of trust within the organization to proceed with each necessary step. These descriptions align with Covey's (2006) conviction that trust within an organization directly impacts the speed with which change can be implemented, allowing performance

to be multiplied. Over time, trust at the institution expanded, particularly due to the beneficial impact of the turnaround experienced by the campus. An important factor in advancing the change initiative was aligning the change initiative with the institution's mission.

Focus on mission. A primary way in which administrators at Program College developed trust for the change initiative within the organization was to retain a focus on the institution's long-held mission. Leaders took specific steps to demonstrate that the initiative supported and extended the values of the mission. Faculty and staff at Program College maintained a belief that the institution provided meaningful opportunities for students and wanted to keep the core mission in place. This approach aligned with Zemsky et al.'s (2005) recommendation that although responding to market forces is an essential strategy for college and university leaders, it is equally important to directly link activities to mission. The interview data from Program College clearly indicated the change process would have been resisted had it not been centered on the institution's mission.

The Program College mission had guided the institution for decades, but the understanding of the mission within the institution was not motivating people to pursue change. However, the mission retained a central importance within the institution and served as a marker for whether proposed changes aligned with Program College values. Executive leaders referenced the mission as part of the rationale for change as a way to continue the work of the institution in reaching the core constituency of students. In his book focused on urgency, Kotter (2008) explained that ensuring that change aligns with possibilities in which people believe can counteract cynicism that may result from

previously failed efforts or the feeling that new ideas are constantly being presented. These issues could have been present at Program College due to numerous previous attempts to pursue change that had stalled in faculty committees or based on faculty resistance.

In relation to adaptive change, Heifetz et al. (2009) recommended that leaders attempt throughout the change process to conserve what is most valuable within an organization. Successful adaptation ensures organizational members are able to build on the best of traditions, identity, and history for future endeavors. An approach that aligned with this recommendation was described by several participants at Program College who identified a 1-day leadership retreat focused on new ideas to support the mission of the institution. Additionally, conversation included refocusing on core tenants of the university and whether any updates should be made. A representative group of more than 30 administrators, faculty, and staff participated in this event, which interview participants described as consolidating around shared purposes. This approach of focusing on mission has been maintained in subsequent years by executive leaders continually emphasizing the theme of changing methods with a consistent mission.

Multiple efforts at Program College to focus on mission as foundational principles that guide change has provided alignment among administrators, faculty, and staff. These shared purposes initially contributed to an acceptance of difficulties to move the change process forward. In their discussion of adaptive challenges, Heifetz and Linsky (2002) explained that people in an organization are willing to make sacrifices if they understand rationale for needed change. One role of leaders is to help people understand what they are willing to give up and what has to be sacrificed to advance the

organizational mission. During this process, it is important for leaders to acknowledge losses that have occurred as well as sacrifices people are making. Recognition from leaders that the change process is difficult is important, even when moving toward an improved future. The executive leaders at Program College communicated an understanding of the difficulties that had been endured during the change process and gratefulness for the “resolve” of faculty and staff to work toward mission fulfillment.

This section explored the prominent comparison themes for *motivating change* at Program College and Technology University. Comparison themes were selected based on the most prominent in the data from each institution and analyzed with a goal of clearly describing defining characteristics in the organizational environments during the phases of change. The comparison themes of a sense of urgency, executive leadership, and responding to market forces were evident at each institution, while the sense of high trust was more prominent at Program College.

Implementing Change

Following the *motivating change* phase, study data demonstrated that each institution next took strategic steps toward the *implementing change* phase. This second phase was evaluated with a particular focus on how the institutions were able to proceed with executing selected initiatives. Multiple elements are necessary for implementing a creative change, including directing ideas and resources while managing personnel, budgets, and deadlines (Belsky, 2012). Program College and Technology University implemented change efforts despite the normal tendency of resistance to change that characterizes higher education institutions. Table 3 presents the themes identified at each institution, along with the comparison themes analyzed in this section. These comparison

themes, each of which is discussed herein, include short-term wins, pursuing creative and calculated risks, expanding involvement and buy-in, and navigating resistance.

Short-Term Wins

At both institutions, demonstrating success during the early stages when implementing significant initiatives was an important part of building momentum for additional change. In his theory on change, Kotter (1996) explained that many people within an organization want to see evidence that the effort required for change is worthwhile. He argued that short-term wins generate momentum that can encourage people who were uncertain about the changes to become supporters and others who were reluctant to begin participating in the initiative. The importance of early wins was critical for the initial initiatives, given failure could have stymied the initiatives. Cameron and Quinn (2011) posited that failed attempts at change negatively impact the organizational

Table 3

Comparison of Themes in Implementing Change Phase

Program College	Technology University
Early success	Connection to teaching mission
Encouraging feedback	Imagining possibilities
Increasing accountability	Seeing others make changes
	Experimentation and results
	Encouraging faculty buy-in

Comparison Themes:

- Short-term wins
- Pursuing creative and calculated risks
- Expanding involvement and buy-in
- Navigating resistance

culture through repercussions, such as lessening of trust, cynicism, frustration, and reduced morale. As people at Program College and Technology University observed short-term wins, momentum increased with the initiatives and expanded the number of people who were involved and supported the projects. Additionally, experiencing success helped cultivate an environment for creating or considering new possibilities in the future. In addition to evidence of the importance of small wins early in the process, interview data reflected an intentionality within each institution to take specific steps toward execution of their key initiatives.

Executing initiatives. Attaining short-term wins necessitated an ability to execute within each organization and implement the initiatives. In their work on execution, Bossidy et al. (2002) described this organizational capacity as “a systematic process of rigorously discussing hows and whats, questioning, tenaciously following through, and ensuing accountability” (p. 22). These elements were present within the implementation phase at both institutions. Participants at each institution described the creation of new ideas, followed by dialogue and evaluation that shaped the projects. Much of the discussion and questioning was driven by administrators at Program College, while faculty initiated the process at Technology University.

A significant reason each institution was able to follow through in implementation was the amount of focus dedicated to the projects. Leaders communicated about the importance of the comprehensive change at Program College as well as the technology initiative at Technology University. Specifically, the administrators, faculty, and staff who were engaged with the initiatives dedicated the time and energy necessary to fulfill the tasks associated with the initiatives, in addition to typical responsibilities. In

describing successful approaches to execution, McChesney, Covey, and Huling (2012) explained that this type of focus on a limited number of projects is essential because if the same people are attempting to accomplish multiple initiatives, then their attention and energy can become too dispersed.

Participants at each institution described an increasing sense of accountability within the institution during the implementation stage. At Program College, intentional efforts were made across departments to define expectations for employees and demonstrate accountability based on performance. This approach was particularly powerful because all levels of leadership also held themselves accountable. At Technology University, participants noted a growing culture of accountability, particularly due to leadership from the president. According to McChesney et al. (2012), a lack of regular accountability is a primary issue for organizational failure to execute at a high level. Consistent accountability is especially important for the implementation of new projects because of the tendency for many people to focus energy on regular and familiar work rather than a new endeavor.

An additional strategy that contributes to successful execution is linking rewards to outcomes (Bossidy et al., 2002). Organizations with an ability to execute at a high level typically have identified ways to reward achievement through offering incentives for new approaches or results. Both institutions incorporated financial incentives during the implementation stage to motivate action. Funds at Program College and Technology University were designated for faculty who participated in the early initiatives. This method incentivized work on the projects and helped each institution move toward demonstrating results perceived to be wins to the campus community.

Demonstrated results. As the beginning stages of change initiatives were implemented at Program College and Technology University, intentional efforts were made to identify achievements and communicate results throughout the organization. These efforts aligned with three characteristics identified by Kotter (1996) as part of a good short-term win. First, the win is visible, so a large number of people within the organization can view for themselves what has been accomplished. Second, the win is unambiguous, so there is no argument about the achievement. Third, the win is directly related to the change effort. Each of these elements was part of the initial results at the two institutions.

At Program College, visible and unambiguous short-term wins were primarily demonstrated through initial enrollment growth. This early success stabilized the budget and resulted in salary increases for employees. The message participants described was that the short-term wins demonstrated the institution would not only survive but also could experience future growth and thriving as an organization. At Technology University, administrators and faculty who were part of this initiative displayed experimentation and results in various settings, including faculty forums and opportunities in the faculty development center. As non-participants witnessed the initial success experienced by colleagues, they became increasingly willing to implement new approaches.

The short-term wins at Program College were directly related to the comprehensive change initiative because it was positioned as essential for survival of the institution. In addition, campus employees were motivated to consider further new initiatives because success was occurring. At Technology University, a key element for

implementing and expanding the technology initiative revolved around faculty observing colleagues making successful changes given the technology initiative was directly related to the missional element of effectiveness in teaching and learning. The connection of the early wins to this mission was enhanced when successes were highlighted for innovation from numerous outside sources.

The work toward executing initiatives and demonstrating results early in the implementation stage was critical for Program College and Technology University. These early wins contributed to a sense of motivation and employees' willingness to pursue further change. This approach is reflected in the literature on adaptive change, such as Heifetz and Linsky's (2002) explanation that demonstrated progress, even on small or technical problems, can build tolerance for change within an organization. Because individuals frequently experience anxiety in relation to change, even small successes can provide encouragement to assume more significant challenges. Additionally, McChesney et al. (2012) claimed that when organizational members have a sense they are winning based on achieving objectives, morale and engagement are both dramatically increased. The momentum generated from these short-term wins translated to the next environmental characteristic evident during the implementing change stage, the appearance that creative and calculated risks were rewarded.

Pursuing Creative and Calculated Risks

During the implementing change phase, each institution demonstrated a capacity for pursuing new models and creative approaches to delivering higher education. A willingness existed within the institution to do something new and not duplicate tactics from other institutions. Implementing new approaches in higher education that

demonstrates a paradigm shift that enriches the student experience is unique, as Kezar (2014) explained. Instead, the tendency for change at colleges and universities is to add similar individual programs that have been successful at another institution. In their work on aligning market sensitivity focused on mission, Zemsky et al. (2005) explained that it is difficult to pursue entrepreneurial approaches in higher education because so many traditions and assumptions constrict creative or market-driven risks. Yet, the environment at the institutions in this study appeared to honor people who were risk-takers and reframed the expectations of what could be accomplished in higher education.

The pursuit of creative solutions at Program College and Technology University reflected aspects of the adaptive change model, which attempts to identify new approaches for complex problems. According to Heifetz (1994), the significant challenges confronting society in this era necessitate leadership and people willing to create and learn new ways because simple solutions will not suffice. Identifying adaptive challenges prompts people to recognize that developing solutions requires new experiments, learning, and adjustments throughout the organization (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Thriving necessitates significant change in attitudes, values, and behaviors based on new realities, which appeared in these case studies.

Trailblazing with new approaches. The key initiatives during the implementation phase at each institution were trailblazing new approaches in higher education. Program College developed a completely new approach for the student experience. Participants noted there were no models at other institutions that could have even provided the option of duplicating them at Program College. Within the organization, those interviewed reported an openness to try new approaches that required

ongoing experimentation and adjustment. As this model was implemented, people throughout the institution increasingly became open to change, with more faculty and staff suggesting ideas. Similarly, participants at Technology University demonstrated an interest in imagining possibilities that could change the teaching and learning experience for faculty and students. The group leading the initiative was especially open to creating new approaches within higher education. As the implementation phase continued, some people who were providing leadership recognized the challenge for faculty throughout the institution to consider new approaches. One of the most effective strategies to encourage fresh thinking was the creation of a video that helped people picture how the future could look as the technology initiative was implemented. The ability to implement this significant initiative has since triggered further ideas and openness to new approaches.

These trailblazing new approaches were implemented because enough people at each institution were comfortable with experimenting. Adaptive change at the organizational level occurs through an ongoing openness to experimentation (Heifetz et al., 2009). For people providing leadership, an experimental mindset is necessary so improvisation continually occurs, providing the time and resources for one set of experimentation to follow another. Participants at both institutions described an institutional environment in which experimentation was followed by adjustments based on learning. Adequate time and resources were allocated for involved faculty and staff to implement new approaches. An additional element necessary for implementing trailblazing initiatives was described by Peters and Waterman (2004), who argued that experimentation can be cultivated through an environment that promotes informal

communication. When people in an organization feel free to talk with anyone, barriers to ideas and new approaches are reduced. Data from both institutions reflected an environment in which personnel at any level felt an openness to share ideas with a supervisor or, in many cases, with administrative leadership.

The creativity demonstrated at Program College and Technology University could be categorized as the skill of “associating” (p. 41), a term introduced into the literature by Dyer et al. (2011). Many people who innovate are able to develop intriguing connections across fields or disciplines that do not appear to have commonalities. People with the skill of associating show a high degree of curiosity in new information and ideas, along with a willingness to draw from diverse experiences. Key figures at Program College and Technology University demonstrated this characteristic of innovators. For example, one administrator at Technology University noted that the curiosity and drive of several leaders in the institution caused them to consistently ask questions about a process. The goal of these individuals was to find potential areas for improvement by questioning underlying assumptions of a practice. Administrators contributed to this environment in that faculty members felt encouraged to dream and create, with a sense of confidence that executive leaders were actively seeking and receptive to new ideas.

Vision compelling action. The willingness of administrators, faculty, and staff at both institutions to take risks and implement creative solutions was compelled by a shared vision. Kotter (1996) explained that a powerful vision can motivate people to take action that may not be in their short-term interests. Pursuing creative possibilities typically requires people to do additional work, operate outside their comfort zones, manage with fewer resources, and/or learn new skills and behaviors. A good vision can

motivate people to move past these difficulties because of the desire to achieve the imagined future. Additionally, an effective vision provides alignment for leaders and personnel within an organization to strategize and implement logical plans based on common goals and direction. The vision at each institution was directly aligned with the mission of uniquely serving students, as was the case at Program College, and excellent teaching and learning, as demonstrated at Technology University.

Resolve in decision-making. Ultimately, leaders at both institutions demonstrated a level of resolve to make decisions in a rapid manner and pursue creative and calculated risks. Program College took risks in overhauling the student experience based on a desire to survive and create a viable future for the institution. Technology University took calculated risks to be ahead of the curve in relation to the teaching and learning experience and carving a niche in the competitive landscape of comparable institutions. Based on their research of individuals who successfully implement creative approaches in organizations, Dyer et al. (2011) claimed that innovative leaders show courage and take “smart risks” (p. 25) because of a desire to implement change. The executive leaders at Program College and Technology University demonstrated a willingness to make these types of difficult decisions. Additionally, intentional efforts were pursued at each institution to expand the involvement of faculty and staff, thus increasing the level of involvement and buy-in across the organization during the implementing change phase.

Expanding Involvement and Buy-In

As the implementation phase progressed, leaders and campus members involved with the initiatives made efforts to expand the involvement and buy-in from employees

throughout the institution. The number of faculty and staff participating in the change initiatives at Program College and Technology University increased, a pattern reflected in the literature about employee involvement in the implementation phase. In Kotter's (1996) change theory, the need for a guiding coalition was emphasized to sustain the process. Although executive leadership is necessary for initiating a significant change initiative, implementing and maintaining new approaches requires involvement of a team of representative people throughout the organization working toward a common goal. According to Kotter, this guiding coalition should be composed of a representative group from the organization, have the appropriate level of authority, demonstrate trust among members, and work toward a shared purpose.

Teamwork is necessary for a guiding coalition to be effective, with a common goal being one of the most important motivators for teams (Kotter, 1996). At Program College, teams were designated to work on sections of the comprehensive project. Technology University also had cultivated an environment in which representative groups of administrators, faculty, and staff were selected for working groups. Because of the amount of energy required to implement change, it is essential to involve people who are interested in the project (Belsky, 2012). Also, the ability to execute a new project is enhanced when senior leadership ensures the involvement from people throughout the organization (McChesney et al., 2012). When employees throughout the organization have the opportunity to contribute to the strategy and implementation of a project, buy-in increases dramatically. Specific strategies for expanding involvement and buy-in during the implementing change phase demonstrated in the data centered on faculty and connection to the mission.

Targeting faculty involvement. Leaders at Program College continued a practice of communicating consistently and openly with faculty to maintain and build buy-in during the implementing change phase. Additionally, administrators identified key faculty who could expand institutional buy-in through their support of the initiative. This strategy was consistent with the recommendation of Heifetz et al. (2009), who stated that identifying supportive allies throughout an organization is critical for implementing adaptive change solutions. In particular, gaining support from unlikely allies can assist implementation because other observers may then be less inclined to resist an initiative.

Administrators at Program College also recognized significant change was occurring quickly; therefore, it was important to provide opportunities for faculty and staff to communicate input. Multiple strategies were implemented to ensure feedback was received and acted upon, thus addressing concerns before they could fester into significant problems. According to Heifetz et al. (2009), navigating adaptive change requires leaders to connect with the values, beliefs, and anxieties of people within the organization. Especially during the implementing change phase at Program College, faculty were provided with frequent opportunities to communicate about their feedback the change initiative.

Multiple steps were also taken at Technology University to encourage faculty buy-in, including providing incentives for professors to experiment with new approaches. Professors could access a center in which personnel focused on professional development, providing opportunities to learn about or practice skills in a low-pressure environment. Several participants noted that sessions frequently included lunch, which allowed individuals to hear from faculty in other fields in an informal setting. It is

importantly to note that professors were not required to participate in the initiative, which contributed to an environment in which individuals could opt-in to the extent they were interested and willing.

Connection to mission. Leaders at each institution worked to ensure clarity of goals for the organization, thus expanding buy-in through connection to the mission. At Program College, the focus was to maintain the mission, while continually adapting with methods and strategies. At Technology University, participation during the implementation phase was broadened by consistently connecting the proposed innovative practices to the institution's teaching mission. In their work on organizations that execute at a high level, McChesney et al. (2012) explained that many organizations fail to meet goals because employees do not have a clear understanding of objectives. The two institutions established shared purposes due to alignment with mission. Although intentional efforts were pursued for expanding buy-in, each institution experienced challenges and had to navigate resistance.

Navigating Resistance

Implementing adaptive change necessitates that people change their values, beliefs, or behaviors (Heifetz, 1994). Systemic change of this type generally cause some level of resistance. At Program College, motivation for change was generated due to concern about the institution's survival; that concern was offset by trust in administrative leaders and a belief that the proposed changes were congruent with the institution's mission. Although faculty and staff were generally supportive of the change, some employees had questions about the initiative and/or resisted the ideas. At Technology University, many faculty were excited about an innovative approach to teaching and

learning. However, some professors were hesitant to adjust teaching methods without knowing potential implications for themselves and students.

Heifetz et al. (2009) argued that the primary reason people resist adaptive change is due to real or perceived loss. Additional factors may include misperceptions about the nature of the threat to an organization, the capability to change, or a desire to preserve the status quo (Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). In higher education specifically, Kezar (2014) explained that change often is met with resistance due to lack of understanding about the intended change; thus, the need to learn is the actual barrier to change. In these various scenarios, people may work actively against those who are leading the initiative (Heifetz et al., 2009).

The responses to resistance varied at each institution due to the situation and type of initiative. Participants at Program College noted a commitment to dialogue as a method for working through resistance. However, because involvement and commitment was expected of the campus community, some individuals who did not support the initiative chose to leave the institution. In other scenarios, executive leaders guided transitions for personnel out of the institution due to an unwillingness to embrace the significant changes underway. This approach is suggested by Kotter (2008), who advocated that when organizational leaders identify personnel who refuse to engage in change initiatives, effective strategies include moving people to projects or departments not associated with the change, transitioning them out of the organization, or exposing behavior in such a way that the organizational culture will force alignment. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) also observed that some people have a difficult time adjusting during an adaptive change and must be transitioned out of the organization. Although losing

employees can be a painful process for leaders and people throughout the organization, transitioning those who will not or cannot adjust demonstrates a commitment to the adaptive change. Such demonstration of commitment sends a significant message to everyone else in the organization about the need to fully participate in the process.

The approach in response to resistance at Technology University was to allow faculty to choose whether or not to participate in the technology initiative. Incentives were provided to encourage involvement, a method that has also been applied to subsequent programs. A common description by participants at the institution and from the provost in particular, was a preference to incentivize innovation rather than mandate it, thereby bringing together like-minded individuals in pursuing new approaches. When change is driven by compliance, according to the provost, the long-term chances of a healthy environment for change are reduced.

At both institutions, executive leaders made choices to continue pursuing change and innovation despite resistance. According to Heifetz et al. (2009), when leaders navigate adaptive change within an organization, disequilibrium should be anticipated given that many people experience some level of conflict, frustration, confusion, and fear of losing something important. It is helpful for leaders to engage with resisters to understand their concerns and also to communicate understanding and even compassion for the pain experienced, while recognizing these reactions are a result of adaptive change. Participants at Program College noted a sense of understanding from executive leaders about the difficulty of change, who also communicated a commitment to proceed. Faculty and staff at Technology University described a level of variability among administrators in recognizing the difficulties in pursuing change, and particularly some

challenges with the transition phase to a new president. However, executive leaders were described as having made intentional efforts to dialogue with faculty and staff, thus softening some of the perceptions held originally following the transition.

Sustaining Change

The final stage of change identified in the case studies was sustaining an environment for change. The data demonstrated that each institution worked to maintain momentum for ongoing innovation and change to occur. This section focuses on how Program College and Technology University are retaining an environment that is conducive to subsequent adaptive change. Table 4 includes the themes identified at each institution, along with the comparison themes analyzed in this section. The comparison themes include defining organizational stories, change as the new normal, imagining the future, and cultivating innovative people.

Defining Organizational Stories

Following the process of successfully motivating and implementing significant change initiatives, leaders at Program College and Technology University crafted a new organizational identity, described through a collective story oriented around innovation and openness to adaptive change; this new identity was a key aspect of the sustaining change phase. The data reflected that participants from both institutions viewed their institutions as leaders in higher education in relation to innovation. The power of these organizational stories was evident in the sense of institutional confidence expressed by administrators, faculty, and staff. In addition, the stories generated activity among people in attempts to live into this new institutional narrative.

Table 4

Comparison of Themes in Sustaining Change Phase

Program College	Technology University
New identity	Organizational identity
Executive leaders driving change	Increasingly change-oriented
Market-oriented activity	Permission to fail
Change becoming the new normal	Evaluating and anticipating the context for higher education
Maintaining trust	Collaboration
Sweeping collaboration	Intentional communication
Strategic communication	Designated resources and structures
Navigating challenges	Challenges with implementing and timing change
Comparison Themes:	
Defining organizational stories	
Change as the new normal	
Imagining the future	
Cultivating innovative people	

Organizational leaders at each institution identified certain stories that reflected the desired environment. These stories had been told multiple times and repeated to the extent that there is deep familiarity across the institution. For example, at Program College, the story about the missed opportunity from years ago had been reiterated to motivate change. Yet the story continues to be shared and resonates as a message for why ongoing innovation is necessary. Kaye and Jacobson (1999) suggested that organizational stories about past events provide essential learning opportunities and contribute to the collective identity of the organization. The repetition of key stories at both institutions emerged during a number of interviews, demonstrating their broad impact.

In his theory on change, Kotter (1996) explained that communicating through metaphors, analogies, and examples can be particularly powerful in creating a vision for an organization. Additionally, Kezar (2014) identified messaging as a key factor in successfully navigating the change process at higher education institutions. It is important for leaders to carefully craft communication and ensure the foundational values driving the change are explained. Notably, the topic of organizational stories is not addressed in Heifetz's (1994) description of adaptive change or Kotter's theory of change. Key stories frequently retold in these case studies extended beyond communication and messaging to reflect an organizational story that influenced identity.

The literature related to organizational stories is an emerging discipline with multiple perspectives represented (Brown, Gabriel, & Gherardi, 2009). Current work on the field reflects agreement that organizational stories can be deeply meaningful and initiate emotional reactions. Stories provide a key way for individuals to conceptualize the identity of an organization. In particular, stories can be helpful for people in making sense of the change they are experiencing. Kaye and Jacobson (1999) claimed that organizational stories can uniquely connect with people's emotions and intellect, more so than other types of communication. Sole and Wilson (2002) described increased attempts in recent years for organizational leaders to disseminate knowledge through stories due to the potential for representing complex ideas in a memorable way. One of the most effective uses for storytelling is the launch of a new idea, such as sharing a vision, because a story can reach a large audience and leverage significant power through emotional connections.

These case studies demonstrated the power that can be crafted through institutional stories. During the motivating change phase, the primary story at Program College was based on fear and questions about institutional survival. Over time, the story has become more focused on opportunities to thrive and provide leadership in the field of higher education. This transition connects with the approach of adaptive leadership as described by Heifetz et al. (2009), in which leaders help people assume significant challenges and thrive. However, reminders by the leadership of Program College regarding the challenges of surviving in the current and forecasted landscape were also communicated frequently. At Technology University, the primary story has focused on the opportunity to live out the institution's mission in new and exciting ways. Over time, this narrative has incorporated an increased emphasis on survival in communicating the needed urgency for change.

Building confidence. Participants interviewed at Program College frequently repeated a story that reflected their burgeoning confidence of being perceived as a higher education leader. This status represented new experiences at the institution and was particularly powerful given the fiscal challenges encountered only a few years previously. For many people, the institution's survival story has remained fresh and served as a consistent reminder of the need to implement change. Participants described feelings of surprise and fulfillment at seeing the institution being featured in media outlets, leaders presenting at regional forums, and administration receiving feedback from other institutions about the impressive innovations occurring at Program College.

Innovative DNA. The story of Technology University as a place with an "innovative DNA" has been crafted and emphasized over time. Institutional leaders have

intentionally supported efforts at innovation as well as developing a brand and messaging about the institution's innovative capabilities. The significance of the technology initiative, along with additional projects that have followed, has contributed to a view that the university is a leader among institutions at national and even international levels. The collective story at Technology University and belief that the institution's reputation for innovation is powerful even during time that doubt creeps in about whether the institution is maintaining the necessary pace for change. This narrative was described as a powerful "self-fulfilling prophecy" in that people will work toward the innovative image. The power of this story is that these views prompt action among administrators, faculty, and staff who desire to be part of an innovative university. In addition, the story carries weight in relationships with businesses and other potential partners outside of Technology University because of the desire to be connected with an institution known for innovation and progressive change.

In their work on academic leadership, Bolman and Gallos (2011) explained that a well-defined story can help explain the unique transformation that can potentially occur through education. Leaders at colleges and universities can apply the strategy of storytelling to convey deep beliefs and meaning held within the organization. Executive leaders who are able to communicate a compelling vision of the future through story can create positive feelings among employees about the institution, their work, and leadership. This institutional narrative needs to be restated consistently and broadly for the message to gain strength throughout the organization. This approach was evident at Program College and Technology University and contribute to the following theme of developing an environment in which change was understood to be the new normal.

Change as the New Normal

Participants at each institution described the current environment as one in which the perception of change has become the new normal. Although some people may be resigned to this environmental characteristic, many participants embraced the notion of anticipating change. The acceptance of change as the new normal was reflected at Program College through a willingness to try new approaches. People at the institution are increasingly identifying possibilities for experimentation with educational experiences. In addition, the commitment to continual adaptation provides freedom, such that an innovation in process can be altered. Programs that have previously been implemented are also adjusted to make improvements. Technology University has cultivated an environment in which change is the new normal by fostering experiments in approaches to teaching and learning, delivery models, and student services. The environment emphasizes continual improvement and finding ways of incrementally refining teaching methods, settings for learning, and student experience. Evidence at both institutions indicated the need to change was widely understood and embraced for the organization to survive and thrive in the future.

Faculty and staff at both institutions reported sensing the freedom to experiment and dream of new methods and models. Over time, people at Program College have felt increased openness to express ideas about new approaches. Similarly, Technology University has maintained a sense that ideas can “bubble up” from multiple parts of the institution. Both organizations have developed an environment that encourages and supports dialogue about ideas rather than discounting suggestions. In their work on execution, Bossidy et al. (2002) explained that organizations that encourage robust

dialogue cultivate creativity and innovation because of the ability to gather information from a broad array of sources. This process is crucial for analyzing quality information when making decisions. Additionally, Peters and Waterman (2004) described an environment in which experimentation is valued, with individuals feeling compelled to try new things. In these scenarios, it becomes riskier for people to accept the status quo and not take risks.

Kotter (2008) suggested that the climate for organizations has shifted from change occurring on an occasional basis to the need to implement successful change continually. Although the higher education field has not reflected rapid change, institutions that have developed this capability and the mindset that change is going to occur may have an advantage (Kezar, 2014). This type of mindset is particularly beneficial when managing unanticipated challenges because the ability to adapt quickly can mitigate some potential negative consequences. Discussion of this theme elaborates on what it means to work in an environment in which change has become the norm by addressing learning from failure, the pace of change, and communication strategy.

Learning from failure. As part of an environment in which change is viewed as normal, participants explained their perception that failure was permitted. In some scenarios, the possibility of failure was encouraged because it represented the opportunity to learn and make adjustments for the future. This characteristic of learning from failure is an important part of adaptive change. Heifetz et al. (2009) stated that organizations that have demonstrated adaptive capabilities treat people who have made mistakes or failed through experimentation as possessing knowledge that needs to be captured and applied. Covey (2006) argued that an organizational environment in which people feel

safe to learn from mistakes and subsequently change engenders trust and credibility. Both institutions demonstrated the capacity for encouraging new attempts and the opportunity to learn from failure, with the understanding that the same mistakes should not be repeated.

This characteristic of learning from failure has a particular distinguishing element within the field of higher education. In her work on change, Kezar (2014) identified the importance of learning from failure to enhance learning with an organization and promote successful change. However, professionals working within colleges and universities typically do not feel comfortable admitting mistakes due to concerns about impacts on their career. Accordingly, higher education leaders could do more to value mistakes because without doing so, potential learning opportunities may be lost. The environment of the two case study institutions did, indeed, seek to capture insights from faculty and staff who were engaged with initiatives as a way of making improvements.

Pace of change. A second factor that was evident at the two institutions relating to change becoming a new normal was an increasing pace of change. By demonstrating the ability to develop and implement new initiatives during previous stages, both institutions generated a sense of momentum and cultivated the capacity for change to occur on an ongoing basis. As the implementation of change initiatives occurred with more rapidity, campus personnel became more comfortable with change in general. Additionally, faculty and staff increasingly came to anticipate change and spoke of an expected increase in innovative initiatives in the years to come.

One challenge experienced at each institution was recognizing how far to push the pace for developing new initiatives. Executive leaders expressed a desire to see

innovations developed and implemented at a faster rate. At the same time, executive leaders recognized a need to implement change at a sustainable pace. These experiences align with Heifetz's (1994) explanation that people in leadership positions must consistently evaluate an acceptable pace for change. When an organization does not balance the pace of change with the extent to which employees can implement new approaches, challenges may emerge that otherwise could be avoided. As Heifetz and Linsky (2002) explained, the reason for these challenges frequently relate to the emotions connected to change:

When you lead people through difficult change, you take them on an emotional roller coaster because you are asking them to relinquish something – a belief, a value, a behavior – that they hold dear. People can stand only so much change at any one time. (p. 117)

As organizations are navigating adaptive change, leaders should continually monitor the level of disequilibrium with a goal of generating adequate energy for attention, engagement, and progress, yet without so much urgency that the organization becomes dysfunctional (Heifetz et al., 2009).

The way in which leaders managed the pace of change demonstrated similarities at both institutions. Administrators at Program College described an ongoing negotiation of the pace of change, with some faculty and staff occasionally wanting things to slow down. At Technology University, the president explained there is an “invisible line” within the environment for how much change could be implemented without creating problems. His stated goal was to push as close to that line as possible without crossing over it. Executive leaders at both institutions expressed an understanding of trying to

manage the pace of change so it is not too fast but also not slowing down to the extent that projects would stall. As was true in the other two major phases (motivating and implementing) of the change process, one of the primary strategies for navigating the pace of change at both institutions was ensuring regular communication.

Communication strategy. The reliance on communication as a strategy was an important element at both institutions in transitioning to an organizational identity that change is the new normal. The data from Program College demonstrated a commitment to communication from administrators that was consistently open and transparent. Participants described ongoing communication that includes updates about changes through monthly employee meetings as well as email announcements. Faculty and staff have come to expect they will be informed and therefore would be surprised if a new initiative was developed without broad awareness. Additionally, the president was described as someone who regularly looked for opportunities to communicate about the need for change to meet external expectations at employee meetings and by email. This strategy aligns with Kotter's (1996) explanation that consistent communication through multiple formats increases the likelihood of people hearing and remembering the message and the importance of making connections on both intellectual and emotional levels.

At Technology University, steps were taken to intentionally communicate with faculty and staff with a goal of enhancing trust. Participants noted increasing efforts from executive leaders to dialogue with faculty in particular about potential innovations. This communication strategy reflects an aspirational goal of university leaders to increase transparency. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) argued that it is essential for leaders to demonstrate this type of desire to understand people's perspectives along with learning

from that input. Beyond collecting feedback, leaders must take the next step and interpret the messages people have communicated as well as the interplay with the adaptive change.

According to Heifetz and Linsky (2002), communication contributes significantly to the potential for successful adaptive change. People may resist change efforts or respond with silence when pushed to evaluate assumptions or the need to change, particularly if the status quo has been long-standing. The success of a change initiative can be enhanced by requesting input about people's perspectives, particularly what is at stake as well as any fears. Heifetz and Linsky stated, "The hope of leadership lies in the capacity to deliver disturbing news and raise difficult questions in a way that people can absorb, prodding them to take up the message rather than ignore it or kill the messenger" (p. 12). Leaders at both institutions demonstrated these capacities, as well as a commitment to improving these types of communication skills.

Imagining the Future

During the third phase of sustaining change, an increasing number of people at each institution were reported to be attempting to forecast future needs and the connection points between higher education, the institution, and region. Additionally, administrators, faculty, and staff are identifying action steps to prepare for this imagined future. At Program College, the campus community has embraced the idea of doing things differently and imagining new possibilities. Participants communicated a commitment to understanding the economic factors of the region and designing academic programs and student experiences that meet these needs. Executive leaders continue to contribute to an understanding about the context impacting Program College, with

regional and national issues continually discussed at employee meetings, particularly by the president.

At Technology University, the ability to evaluate and anticipate the context for higher education improved during the phases of motivating and implementing change. During the sustaining change phase, intentional efforts have been made by administrators to increase communication about the climate in which higher education institutions are operating. Campus personnel have also developed capabilities for forecasting the future and considering potential needs and solutions. The ability to imagine possibilities has been demonstrated through several initiatives, evidencing a willingness to adapt as needed. These characteristics have provided a foundation for change and contributed to action at each institution.

Institutional leaders have maintained the momentum of change to the extent that imagining the future has become prominent and reflects a commitment to the institutional mission and vision, which is essential for successful adaptive change. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) explained, “To sustain momentum through a period of difficult change, you have to find ways to remind people of the orienting value – the positive vision – that makes the current angst worthwhile” (p. 120). The campus community at Program College and Technology University has recognized the need to change as more important than retaining the current status. Zemsky et al. (2005) argued that college and university administrators and faculty must acknowledge the challenges that could result from implementing change. However, it is equally important to recognize the implications for maintaining the status quo as these scholars noted:

To convene such a conversation is to dance with change, to enter into relation with a future not yet fully imagined. To demur, to respond, 'I'm OK, just want to sit this one out,' is to let someone else choose your partner as well as call the tune. (p. 201)

It was evident from the data that participants at each institution have chosen to engage with potential change into the future rather than attempt to hold on to the status quo.

Kezar (2014) identified forecasting as a significant deficit among most colleges and universities. Because institutions can operate as autonomous entities, failure to maintain awareness of broad social, political, and economic factors that impact the context in which higher education institutions operate can occur. Zemsky et al. (2005) argued that it is particularly important for higher education administrators to maintain a clear understanding of distinctive organizational strengths when identifying the appropriate market opportunities that also align with an institution's values and mission. Leaders at both institutions have demonstrated a commitment to maintain current knowledge about the context in which they operate, aligning with Kezar's advice that change agents should consistently align institutional planning with current societal trends. Based on the literature, it is unusual to find such awareness about potential opportunities for change dispersed throughout each organization, particularly among faculty. The capacity for imagining the future is demonstrated through pragmatic activities of program development and reliance on data.

Program development. One way imagining the future has been specifically demonstrated at both institutions involves continual efforts to develop programs and initiatives that meet expected demands. Program College has consistently implemented

initiatives during recent years that address issues of affordability for students and families. Technology University maintains a focus on teaching and learning, along with technological issues to ensure a connection with societal needs. Both institutions are experimenting with various delivery models to enhance opportunities for student access. Academic programs are also being carefully crafted to serve the demographics of students at each institution. Specific attention is given to regional needs as curriculum is developed and approved. Additionally, people at both institutions are highly attuned to ensure students are developing skills that will allow them to be successful in a changing world. These strategies are consistent with the recommendation of Zemsky et al. (2005) that colleges and universities can strengthen their financial status and mission by evaluating and anticipating opportunities within the market. Identifying opportunities for growth, productivity improvement, and reducing costs can be opportunities to stimulate the institution and subsequently reinvest in the central components of its mission. These types of decisions are being made at Program College and Technology University, and increasingly so by relying on data.

Reliance on data. Both institutions are increasingly shaping expectations and making decisions for the future by collecting and analyzing data. At Program College, the understanding of context has also been enhanced by increasing the institution's capability to produce data. Institutional leaders are relying more on data for decision making and evaluating processes. Participants recognized this as an area of growth for the institution and intentionality in moving away from decisions based on instinct alone. The commitment to data analysis was committed by adding a staff member to focus on institutional research. At Technology University, participants noted a trend in recent

years for people throughout the organization to depend on data for making choices. In particular, people have recognized the influence of the president in requiring data for decision making.

The focus on external needs and demands that has been developed at each institution reflects a cultural trait encouraged by Kotter (2008) as one means of generating a continual sense of urgency. With an external focus, people are able to identify relevant threats and opportunities. Leaders are frequently able to identify this information through engagement with personnel who are at the frontlines of the organization. Additionally, organizations are able to interact with data in ways that adequate information is collected, but not too much to overwhelm people or slow a process. These approaches, demonstrated at each institution, were increasingly effective because of institutional commitments to cultivating innovative people.

Cultivating Innovative People

The final theme explored in relation to the sustaining change phase has been a commitment to cultivating innovative people at each institution. Steps have been taken at each institution to hire people who are inclined to change or seeking opportunities to innovate. Additionally, the organizations have promoted opportunities for new learning and personnel development. An emphasis on personnel appears in the literature related to execution. For example, Bossidy et al. (2002) explained that an organization needs the right people working individually and together for successful implementation of projects. Additionally, Heifetz et al. (2009) argued that developing a pipeline of leaders throughout an organization is critical for implementing adaptive change on a recurring basis.

The benefits of the approach to cultivating innovative people have been demonstrated by the increasing regularity with which ideas are generated by people at all levels. At Program College, ideas were primarily formulated and driven by Dr. Smith during the phases of motivating and implementing change. As new executives have been hired in recent years, idea generation has expanded at the administrative level. Additionally, as the change initiatives have taken hold and demonstrated success, faculty and staff are increasingly proposing new ideas during the current stage of sustaining change. Technology University demonstrated a capacity for generating ideas early in the phases, including a reliance on faculty for idea generation during the motivating change phase. As the institution has developed the environment, an increasing number of people have proposed suggestions with an idea that the best ideas “win.”

Hiring practices. The data reflected that both institutions have relied on emphasizing innovation and adaptability as part of hiring practices. This strategy has been a central part of cultivating innovative personnel and developing an environment that is conducive to change. Dyer et al. (2011) noted that organizations with innovative people who demonstrate behaviors of questioning, observing, networking, and experimenting also become innovative organizations. In relation to adaptive change, Heifetz (2009) stated that the most important task of executives attempting to lead adaptive change is to ensure the organization is hiring the right people who are matched to the appropriate roles and responsibilities.

Technology University began emphasizing hiring as part of the motivating change phase. Participants noted that subsequently, the focus has been retained, and innovative candidates have also sought employment at the institution due to a desire to work in such

a setting. Program College demonstrated a commitment to hiring innovative people later in the process, after much of the work for the comprehensive change had been initiated. However, the institution began emphasizing hiring change-oriented administrators. Similar to Technology University, Program College personnel noted that an increasing number of innovative candidates applied for positions at the institution to be part of the dynamic environment.

The president at each institution made efforts to craft a leadership team that could guide further change. Both presidents intentionally hired change agents while reconstituting their administrative teams in recent years. This leadership approach aligns with recommendations by Dyer et al. (2011) in their work on innovation who suggested emphasizing creativity skills among executive leaders to enhance innovation within an organization. For higher education settings, Kezar (2014) proposed that current leaders need to have a capacity to be change agents, including a willingness to evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of current approaches.

Zemsky et al. (2005) noted the importance for college and university leaders to development strategies and practices for hiring skilled professionals, especially emphasizing background and experiences from non-academic settings. As part of his research on exceptional companies, Collins (2001) identified hiring the right people as a foundational strategy. Collins found that organizational leaders were willing to transition people out of the organization if they would not be able to contribute to advancement. Additionally, leaders focused on hiring the right people and then, as a secondary step, ensuring people were in the right positions. The focus on hiring the best people allowed smoother adaptation in a changing world, reducing the need to motivate and manage

people, and possibility for achievement that would not be possible with the wrong people as part of the organization. These hiring decisions require significant rigor to apply accountability measures consistently at all levels of the organization.

New learning. At each institution, cultivating innovative people has included an emphasis on promoting new learning through training and personnel development or engaging with experimental approaches. The sense at Program College was that people were initially pushed to try new approaches due to the desire for the institution to survive. After experiencing successes, people have increasingly appreciated the learning and increasingly looked for new opportunities. At Technology University, people have demonstrated an openness to new possibilities and willingness to consider unexplored options through each stage. According to Heifetz et al. (2009), organizations with a high level of adaptive capacity have cultivated an openness to commitment and learning. People throughout the organization are willing to challenge assumptions, experiment with new approaches, and give up on previous methods.

Training and personnel development were particularly evident at Technology University, which created a faculty development center even in advance of the motivating change phase. Many participants identified this center as a significant contributor to innovation because of the creative ideas proposed as well as providing a safe place for faculty to attempt new methods in teaching. According to Kezar (2014), professional development in the higher education setting is one of the most effective ways to assist faculty and staff with making sense of change. Additionally, both institutions have incentivized new learning for faculty through stipends, grants, or other potential awards based on experimenting with teaching and learning. This approach aligns with a

recommendation from Bolman and Gallos (2011), who stated that success in managing in an academic setting “rests in structuring a work environment that supports and rewards faculty for what they do best” (p. 59). The openness to new learning at each institution overlaps with evidence of collaboration, another important element of cultivating innovative people.

Collaboration. Participants at each institution emphasized the ability to collaborate among administrators, faculty, and staff. At Program College, executives have taken steps to cultivate collaboration throughout the campus. Participants described a community feeling among faculty and staff, along with a level of mutual respect. It was apparent from the data that people enjoyed working together which contributed to crossing typical boundaries in higher education, such as academics and student life. Based on his study of productivity and creativity among individuals and teams, Belsky (2012) concluded that power can be generated to move ideas forward when there is a sense of community. The interaction that occurs within a community offers valuable feedback, refines ideas, and provides support and inspiration. Development and implementation of creative ideas within an organizational setting necessitates involvement from multiple people and teams or departments, demonstrating the importance of collaboration.

Executive leaders at Technology University have cultivated an environment that encourages collaboration by reflecting a high value for the work of faculty. Additionally, administrators have demonstrated a willingness to move beyond hierarchy to promote innovation. Incentives at the institution have been specifically directed at faculty to encourage involvement and engage professors in the creation of new ideas. The faculty

development center has helped bring together professors from various fields to learn from each other and work together.

The goal of enhancing collaboration at these two institutions connects with an emphasis on distributed leadership in adaptive change theory as described by Heifetz et al. (2009). The adaptive change model posits that long-term solutions to significant challenges will require involvement from many people. A collaborative environment within higher education is beneficial for sharing ideas across departments and functions as well as reducing the strength of assumptions (Kezar, 2014).

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to study the environmental characteristics of exemplar institutions that have consistently created and implemented adaptive solutions to significant challenges. To evaluate these characteristics, the environment of two institutions, a contributing factor to the organizational culture, was studied. This chapter provided a brief summary of the data analysis process for this research followed by a comparative analysis of the comparison themes identified at Program College and Technology University during each stage of change. The themes most prominent in the data from each institution were selected and analyzed as comparison themes, with a goal of clearly describing defining characteristics in the organizational environments during the phases of change. Throughout the chapter, the findings were described in relation to the literature, exploring areas of alignment and distinction.

The analysis of Chapter 5 addressed the primary themes of the case study with specific attention to comparisons resulting from the research question guiding the study: *What are the environmental characteristics within a higher education institution that*

consistently produce adaptive change? During the phases of motivating change, implementing change, and sustaining change, comparison themes were evident, with unique features identified at each institution. The final chapter addresses the significance of the study, along with limitations of the research and suggestions for further areas of inquiry.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

During recent years, multiple factors have converged to uniquely pressure higher education administrators and faculty to evaluate the current state of higher education. The critiques from varied sources, including students, families, politicians, and the media, revolve around issues of affordability for students, institutional budget models, expected and actual outcomes of a higher education experience, and the changing needs of a diverse student demographic (Blumenstyk, 2014a; Kezar, 2009). Although the impetus for change is increasingly recognized, the same critics have frequently noted the slow pace of change demonstrated at colleges and universities (Blumenstyk, 2014a; Selingo, 2013; Zemsky, 2013). Because of the increasing expectations on college and university administrators and faculty to navigate successful change, the purpose of this research was to study the environmental characteristics of exemplar institutions that have consistently created and implemented adaptive solutions to significant challenges.

The adaptive change model was selected for this study due to the emphasis on identifying innovative solutions for significant challenges along with a commitment to new learning (Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). The adaptive change model is well-suited to address the problems currently facing higher education because it explores deeply held beliefs and values that limit innovative solutions. The adaptive change model increases the understanding of how leadership, systems, and adaptation

interact and contribute to change (Heifetz et al., 2009). Many contemporary issues require creating new knowledge or skills along with significant changes to current priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties (Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997; Wagner & Kegan, 2006).

The research question guiding this study was the following: *What are the environmental characteristics within a higher education institution that consistently produce adaptive change?* The research design was a comparative case study analysis, implemented with a goal of identifying environmental characteristics at the two sites that aligned or conflicted with each other, along with relevant literature. I visited each campus for 1 week to conduct research and interviewed 44 participants, including presidents, administrators, faculty, and staff. I began coding and data analysis by utilizing NVIVO 10 to categorize related words and phrases into unit groupings. After identifying clusters of meanings, I developed themes that explained how participants described the characteristics of their work environment, particularly those that promoted adaptive change. Each case was analyzed separately to understand the environmental characteristics contributing to adaptive change before cross-case synthesis was applied. The findings and analysis were strengthened through this approach of working on each case separately prior to comparison (Yin, 2014). One of my goals in conducting this research was to identify potential contributors to successful change endeavors that could be applied by college and university administrators and faculty. This chapter addresses the significance of the study, limitations of the research, implications for practice, recommendations, and areas for further research.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the literature related to change in higher education in several ways due to the focus on environments that contribute to successful adaptive change at exemplar institutions. The primary findings from this study that contribute to the literature are the demonstrated phases of change, alignment with Kotter's (1996) stages of change in higher education settings, a sense of urgency continuum from fear to opportunity, encouraging failure, and the power of organizational stories in college and university settings. These topics will be explored further in this section.

Phases of Change

This research demonstrated that distinct phases of change occurred at each case study institution. Participants described experiences that were categorized for this study into phases of motivating, implementing, and sustaining change. Although varying characteristics were identified during these phases at each institution, the broad categories were clearly evident at each institution. This finding contributes to the literature on change in higher education by demonstrating the demarcations that can be present in an institution attempting to navigate change efforts.

Alignment with Kotter's Stages of Change

Many people within higher education claim that the applicability of planned change literature, such as Kotter's (1996) stages of change, is limited for colleges and universities. These critics note that the literature has been shaped by research and recommendations developed from the business field, which operates with different principles, priorities, and organizational structures than colleges and universities. However, the findings from this study demonstrated numerous connections between

Kotter's theory and how successful adaptive change occurs at exemplar higher education institutions. The phases in which change occurred at Program College and Technology University incorporated several aspects recommended by Kotter, including generating a sense of urgency, achieving short-term wins, and expanding buy-in throughout the organization. Although there are unique elements for how change occurs within the higher education setting, particularly due to shared governance and the role of faculty, this research demonstrated striking similarities between planned change models, as exemplified by Kotter, and the experiences described by participants at two exemplar institutions.

Sense of Urgency Continuum from Fear to Opportunity

Cultivating a sense of urgency within organizations is an important element in the change literature, particularly in planned change models. Most often, the sense of urgency has been described as a motivation based out of fear or a need to change, while, in some cases, urgency can be generated due to a vision. At the two case study institutions, a sense of urgency was based on a continuum of motivations. One end of the spectrum, and the primary source of urgency at Program College, centered on fear for survival of the organization. The other end of the spectrum, and the strongest motivator for change at Technology University, was an identified opportunity. Yet both institutions demonstrated elements of each end of the continuum, although one side was reflected most prominently. This distinction of a broad-based sense of urgency is distinctive from the change literature and especially for the field of higher education. The research from this study presents the sense of urgency as both pushing and pulling people within the organization.

Additionally, the possibility of identifying future opportunities as promoting a sense of urgency is included in the literature at a minimal level. Typically, literature on change describes urgency related to fear-based issues, such as revenue or financial challenges. This research contributed to the literature by emphasizing the power of opportunity in developing a broad-based sense of urgency.

Encouraging Failures

Higher education institutions are frequently critiqued for maintaining environments in which failure is discouraged or punished. The institutions included in this research study demonstrated that failure could be tolerated and even encouraged due to the potential for new learning. Participants described a general openness to failure and understanding that initiatives would include learning from mistakes and making adaptations. Although accountability measures were in place to promote high standards, employees still perceived failure was accepted and promoted as long as learning occurred. This finding contributes to higher education change literature by demonstrating the potential for colleges and universities to cultivate an environment in which experiencing failure can contribute to moving change initiatives forward.

Power of Organizational Stories

The literature on change has emphasized the importance of vision to stimulate and sustain initiatives and projects. One of the unique elements identified by the findings in this study was the power of organizational stories for generating and sustaining change. At Technology University, the collective identity of having an innovative DNA promoted an idea of which people wanted to be part and prompted action. Similarly, as Program

College developed an organizational story as an innovative leader in higher education, people expressed a desire to engage in activities that aligned with this new identity.

Although literature on organizational stories is emerging, the data from each institution clearly demonstrated the power of a broad story to define a collective identity, provide direction for an institution, and initiate action. It is important to note that the organizational stories were not developed solely for institutional branding, but resulted from the environment and expressed an identity for the people of the organization. The leadership within each organization took responsibility for nuancing a story and ensuring it was a compelling version heard multiple times. The story was heard and understood within the organization before it was converted to marketing efforts.

Limitations

The research for this study may be particularly interesting to higher education administrators or faculty interested in contributing to environments conducive for change. However, one of the confines inherent within qualitative studies is that the generalizability of findings is limited due to the contextual nature of the research. In designing this study, the intent was not to identify generalizable findings but environmental characteristics that were contributing to successful adaptive change in the two selected exemplar settings. Although the generalizability of specific findings from this study is limited, the potential transferability of certain dimensions may be of wide interest because of the pressing need for significant changes in the current higher education context.

Several elements within the research design should be recognized as limitations of the study. The primary factor was the amount of time spent on each campus. I visited

each campus for a full week, but more data could have been collected with a return trip to the campus or more time during my singular visit. Also, the experiences described in this research are based on self-reported perceptions of the 44 participants. Other participants in the institution may likely have described different perspectives. Additionally, the timing of the campus visits could have impacted the nature of the interviews conducted. For one institution, I visited the campus during the summer, while my week at the other institution was conducted during the last week of classes of the fall semester. These variations could have influenced the availability of potential participants as well as the perspectives of people who were interviewed based on the nuances of the academic year.

Limitations also resulted from the selection of the two faith-based institutions. Although the focus of the study did not include elements unique to faith-based institutions, interview participants did reference spiritual values on occasion. Some of the expectations personnel maintained for their environment or viewed as a positive or negative feature could be directly related to working for a faith-based organization. For example, some participants spoke about God's provision for their institution or the influence of church denominational traditions on institutional practices. Thus, some findings for this study may resonate more strongly at faith-based institutions than other colleges and universities. Also, the two institutions are categorized as small or medium-sized institutions. Participants noted the benefits and challenges of working in such an environment, which impacts the findings of the study.

Because of the time-bound nature of this research, the long-term effectiveness and implications of the adaptive changes were not fully understood. Although participants

described a significant period of recent history at each institution, multiple factors could impact the results from adaptive changes in following years.

Finally, my perspective as the researcher in some ways represented a limitation for this research. As explained in Chapter 3, my experiences in working at a faith-based institution that previously encountered significant challenges during my time of employment form a central part of my views on higher education. Additionally, I participated as a member of a doctoral research team focused on change and innovation for several years. This group was working to identify creative approaches by individuals and institutions to meet societal expectations for higher education. Although multiple approaches were applied to ensure the trustworthiness and validity for this study, my personal and professional experiences did contribute to each phase of this research.

Recommendations for Practice

The research for this study identified several environmental characteristics that appeared to contribute to the organizational capability for successfully implementing adaptive changes on a recurring basis. This section identifies and explores the most significant implications from this study based on the results at the two institutions in this case study. Specific recommendations based on study findings are provided, with the expectation these practices could be helpful to college and university administrators and faculty in similar settings. The order of recommendations is provided in general alignment with the sequence of the phases identified at the case study institutions of motivating, implementing, and sustaining change.

Analyze and Communicate About Market Forces

Recommendation 1: Leaders must continuously scan and communicate national and regional trends to ensure adequate motivation for change throughout the institution. A key finding from this research was the level of knowledge among faculty and staff members about the market forces impacting higher education in general as well as the regional issues shaping the competitive position for the institution. Although people in administrative positions in higher education often have a clear understanding of market forces, faculty and staff members may have minimal or sporadic awareness of market realities. This research demonstrated the importance for intentionally increasing understanding among all employees about market forces, such as the budget challenges confronting higher education institutions, local economic issues, expectations for employment from students and families, and concerns about cost and debt levels. Senior-level administrators should evidence a commitment to cultivate an environment for ongoing dialogue with faculty and staff members about current pressures on higher education, such as expectations for affordability, the need for demonstrable outcomes, and anticipated increases in accountability measures. Additionally, attention should be directed toward local factors, including regional higher education competitors, unique characteristics of local student populations, and economic realities.

Increasing the awareness of market forces can provide common language for people in evaluating potential changes for the institution. Simultaneously, increasing understanding of market forces must be catalyzed to prompt action as a response to the need for change and attempt to maintain a competitive position in the higher education landscape. As Kezar (2014) explained, this characteristic is unique within higher

education because of the tendency for institutions to become autonomous or withdrawn from the surrounding context, thus failing to map program planning to external factors. Faculty could also contribute to an institution by developing an awareness of the multiple factors impacting higher education as well as regional opportunities and challenges. Administrators and faculty could work together to maintain ongoing dialogue about how market forces may be impacting institutional vitality.

Develop a Broad Sense of Urgency

Recommendation 2: Higher education leaders should focus on generating a broad and continual sense of urgency that prompts action based on a continuum, with fear on one end and opportunity at the other. Senior-level leaders should attempt to rely on both elements, fear and opportunity, to cultivate an understanding throughout the organization that change needs to occur quickly. Administrators should evaluate this range of motivators and apply the appropriate stimulus based on the current status and goals. The survival element can be applicable for addressing crisis, but equally important is presenting an opportunity or compelling vision to which people within the organization can aspire. In addition to internal dynamics, institutions that are not confronted with a crisis should be willing to point to external factors that require change along with visionary goals.

For institutions attempting to pursue adaptive change on an ongoing basis, a sense of urgency should be continually communicated to employees. This ongoing sense of urgency can contribute to a sense that change has become the new normal. Higher education administrators should consistently look for ways to communicate the reasons for a need to change. One of the primary contributors to the consistent sense of urgency

at these institutions was the increasing awareness of context among faculty and staff. This understanding of changing issues that impacted the institution, including market forces as described in the previous implication, provided a significant part of the foundation for the sense of urgency. Higher education leaders may not have to make as strong a case for change when there is a comparable level of understanding about contextual factors among administrators, faculty, and staff. Cabinet-level administrators can cultivate this awareness by sponsoring and resourcing relevant research, such as white papers, and consistently communicating information about factors impacting the institution.

Administrators should also attempt to base the sense of urgency on future expectations. The ability to forecast is becoming more important for educational leaders to more rapidly meet shifting needs and demands. Higher education personnel can develop these skills through intentionally evaluating current trends and projecting possible developments in the future. It is important to note that forecasting does not always result as expected, but helps create an awareness that adaptation needs to continually occur.

Connect Change to Mission

Recommendation 3: Leaders should ensure change initiatives are connected to the institutional mission. The findings in this research demonstrate the importance of centering change efforts in core missional elements in which people throughout the organization believe, which contributes to increased support among employees and a willingness to contribute and collaborate. Additionally, by ensuring change initiatives align with the institutional mission, leaders can expand, change, or discontinue projects

as circumstances change because employees recognize an ongoing commitment to the mission. Higher education administrators and faculty should only pursue change efforts that demonstrably fit within the institution's mission. As ideas and initiatives are developed and implemented, targeted communication should demonstrate alignment between new approaches and an institution's mission.

Designate Resources

Recommendation 4: Higher education leaders must designate resources, with the intent of incentivizing personnel to pursue new ideas or join a change initiative.

Leveraging resources is a critical method for encouraging community members to be open to change and innovation and is most important in engaging faculty with change efforts. Institutional leaders can offer financial payments to faculty for working on a change initiative, create grants with the intent of stimulating creativity, and provide public recognition to faculty and staff who were engaged with change or innovative efforts. In this research, these types of strategies were demonstrated to be effective for prompting creative ideas and willingness to try new approaches. In particular, the creation of the faculty development center at Technology University paid long-term dividends with a collective group of professors who were willing to experiment.

Although many colleges and universities are challenged by strained budgets, ensuring funds are set aside for personnel development and incentivizing innovation is essential. Making choices to apply finances toward change endeavors will also likely require identifying areas to reduce expenses or improve efficiencies, as reflected in this research. One administrator described these decisions as “investing” in strategic opportunities and “divesting” from areas of limited potential. One successful example

that could be applicable to other institutions was providing limited funds for prototyping and testing small initiatives. This type of approach necessitates that institutions desiring to pursue change provide resources for calculated risks and demonstrate a tolerance for learning from failure and experimentation.

Valuing Mistakes from Experimentation

Recommendation 5: Higher education administrators and faculty should demonstrate increased capacity for valuing mistakes resulting from experimenting and attempting new approaches. It is critical for employees within an institution to understand that failure is tolerated, and even encouraged, due to the potential for new learning. The data from this research demonstrated the environments promoted new learning through demonstrably valuing mistakes, thus encouraging people to learn from failure and make improvements to projects. This approach can allow continual adaptation and ongoing improvement; however, it is important for administrators and faculty to demonstrate a high level of accountability to ensure the same mistakes are not repeated.

Colleges and universities are frequently criticized for maintaining risk-averse environments in which failure is perceived as highly problematic. Often, people feel hesitant to experiment due to the fear of making a mistake; when failure does occur, admitting mistakes is discouraged. Higher education administrators and faculty can show value in the learning that comes from experimentation by encouraging the pursuit of calculated risks rather than avoiding mistakes. The encouragement of testing new options and prototyping projects can reduce the fear of failure that is common in higher education institution.

Additionally, administrators and faculty can demonstrate openness to mistakes by ensuring people feel comfortable asking questions and proposing new solutions, even if a new approach would break with current expectations. Employees should have an understanding that assumptions can be challenged, and any idea can be discussed without quick rejection. Campus employees could pursue similar tactics by demonstrating an openness for people to ask questions, push the limits on current structures or processes, and dream about new possibilities.

Emphasize Collaboration

Recommendation 6: Higher education senior leaders and faculty should identify opportunities for emphasizing collaboration, particularly across departments and functions, to accomplish adaptive change. Truly collaborative efforts can generate creative ideas when people are willing to work across traditional lines. Administrators and professors should look for ways to promote collaboration along with inter-departmental work, such as academics and student development or academics and student services. Employees can contribute to a collaborative environment by offering or participating in projects with teams that include people from multiple departments. Additionally, providing a professional development center, as was the case at Technology University, can encourage faculty from varied disciplines to learn about new approaches or ideas.

In addition to collaborating within an institution, administrators and faculty should explore and pursue partnerships with other organizations or institutions that may allow innovative opportunities. Higher education leaders should be willing to identify areas in which an institution may not be able to develop expertise and pursue

collaborative arrangements with other institutions or corporations. With increasing demand for new approaches in higher education, drawing on such external expertise can open up new possibilities for adaptive change.

Address Faculty Governance

Recommendation 7: Cabinet-level leaders and faculty must work together to implement a faculty governance system that aligns with the culture of the institution and allows change to occur in a timely manner. The dynamics between administrative and faculty leadership were demonstrated differently at each institution. However, senior leaders and professors had identified ways to work together to ensure change initiatives could be pursued without unnecessary roadblocks.

Cultivate Risk-Taking

Recommendation 8: Higher education leaders must demonstrate a willingness to take risks and cultivate the same approach throughout the institution in the pursuit of adaptive change. The challenges confronting higher education today will require radical solutions and a willingness from institutions to attempt new and trailblazing approaches. Administrators, faculty, and staff need to develop an interest in and capacity for pursuing approaches that represent fresh thinking for higher education and meet the changing expectations of broader society.

Administrators and faculty who desire to cultivate an environment in which risk-taking is promoted should demonstrate the importance of taking chances, developing new approaches that do not have previous examples from which to draw. People should be acknowledged for trying new approaches, even when failure occurs. A commitment to risk-taking should be regularly communicated and supported with designated resources.

New initiatives and projects should be reflective of the strengths of an institution and responsive to the needs within the region. Additionally, administrators and faculty should attempt to identify future issues and potential solutions to demonstrate the value of higher education programs to those needs.

It is important to note that developing an environment in which risk-taking is encouraged includes significant challenges. Employees must have a level of openness to change and innovation, along with resolve to work through the challenges that arise with new approaches. Additionally, pursuing an environment of risk-taking requires administrators and faculty to be willing to make difficult decisions that could include addressing issues of increasing performance accountability, discontinuing programs, terminating some employees, and redirecting resources. It can be challenging to risk resources when pursuing a new opportunity due to financial challenges for the institution or implications for a professional career resulting from failure. However, a level of courage is necessary when pursuing adaptive change.

Over-Communicate with Faculty and Staff

Recommendation 9: Administrators should increase levels of communication with faculty and staff members to build buy-in for change efforts and the direction of the institution. Communication with employees should occur on broad levels, such as through employee meetings and emails, as well as personal outreach in individual meetings and smaller groups. Executive leaders at each case study institution recognized the benefits of communicating with people about regional trends, challenges confronting higher education, initiatives within the organization, and an assessment of the institutions' status. Similar practices should be implemented by higher education leaders,

even if increased communication may extend beyond the personal comfort zone of particular leaders.

Administrative leaders can unleash power throughout an institution when information is disseminated broadly. Increasing communication levels can enhance buy-in and support for initiatives. Additionally, providing opportunities for two-way communication with faculty and staff members allows individuals to express perspectives and challenges, even if proposed solutions are not implemented. These types of practices that demonstrate open communication enhance trust and help employees feel part of something bigger than individual responsibilities or a single department. Administrators and faculty should work together to identify ways to increase the flow of information within an institution, thereby building trust and buy-in.

Repeatedly Tell the Story

Recommendation 10: Executive leaders should identify a compelling organizational story that confirms a collective identity and prompts action based on aspirational goals. The data from this study demonstrated the potential that exists when institutional leaders, particularly the president, develop a community that reflects core values along with a vision for the future. The story at Program College was one of an increasingly innovative institution that has stayed true to its mission. At Technology University, the organizational story centered on the innovative DNA of the organization that is expanding in prominence and profile. Each story resonated with employees because it was true to the identity but simultaneously provided motivation and compelled people into the future.

Institutional leaders should form a story that resonates with employees and contributes to action. The collective story must be core to an institution's ethos and goals and should not be perceived only as branding or unlikely hopes of a future identity. Rather, it needs to be based in reality along with sharing a vision for the future. When this story is defined, institutional leaders should find compelling ways to share the story with faculty and staff, and then repeat it frequently and in various ways, for the message to permeate the environment.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings from this case study suggest the possibility for further research on successful change within higher education institutions. To better understand how institutions consistently produce adaptive change, additional study could be focused on different types of institutions, the impact of particular traditions in faith-based settings, the role of faculty, and specific elements of adaptive change. Potential areas for further research are described in this section.

This research focused on two private, faith-based institutions, representing one segment of the higher education field. Further research could be conducted in the public sector or at larger institutions to identify characteristics in those settings. Additionally, the setting for each institution was in a small town or city of a rural area. The factors encountered at each institution had some similarities due to demographic and economic factors. However, studying institutions in other contexts, such as a large city or suburban location, could result in identifying varying themes.

During the course of this study, one of the consistent topics was the role of faculty. Participants at all levels of the organization discussed faculty participation in

change efforts, professors who initiated new initiatives, and faculty hesitancy to change. Executive leaders at each institution emphasized the importance of working with faculty to implement successful adaptive change. Future research could focus on how faculty engage with change efforts or lead change initiatives. A related area of potential research is the role of faculty and administrators in governance systems that allow or promote effective approaches to change.

The role of the board was not addressed in this research, but was mentioned by a few participants. Future research could focus on how the board of an institution guides, directs, or supports adaptive change initiatives.

Another potential area for further research of successful adaptive change in faith-based institutions is the impact of specific faith traditions. During interviews conducted for this study, several participants referenced the influence of the particular faith tradition on their institution's culture and ethos. These administrators, faculty, and staff suggested that some approaches at the institution were based on practices or beliefs that influenced a significant group of people within the organization. Further research could be devoted to this issue of how faith traditions impact an environment for change.

This research began to explore the power of organizational stories in solidifying the direction of an institution and providing motivation for further change efforts. The literature related to organizational stories is developing and is thus limited in the research on change and, specifically, in higher education. The impact of these organizational stories at Program College and Technology University suggest this is a significant area for additional research.

Finally, further research could be conducted with a longitudinal study. For this research, there was a time limitation because interviews were conducted during my 1 week on campus. A study that implemented a longitudinal methodology could identify unique findings about how people perceive change over time.

Conclusion

This study was initiated in response to the numerous expectations college and university administrators and faculty are confronted with market forces and pressures that demand successful change implementation. The purpose of this research was to study the environmental characteristics of exemplar institutions that have consistently created and implemented adaptive solutions to significant challenges. The adaptive change model was selected for this study due to the emphasis on identifying innovative solutions for significant challenges (Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

The research question guiding this study was the following: *What are the environmental characteristics within a higher education institution that consistently produce adaptive change?* The research design was a comparative case study analysis, implemented with a goal of identifying environmental characteristics at the two sites that aligned or conflicted with each other, along with relevant literature. Although the study was not designed for generalizability of findings, there may be transferability of findings of interest to higher education administrators and faculty.

One of my goals in conducting this research was to identify potential contributors to successful change that may be beneficial for college and university administrators and faculty. In an era during which higher education will have to change to meet societal

demands, my hope is the findings from this research will assist administrators and faculty to cultivate environments in which institutions can successfully navigate adaptive change.

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APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT



Characteristics of Higher Education Environments Conducive to Adaptive Change

Ben Thomas, Cand. Ph.D.

IRB #66-15

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Voluntary Status: You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted by the researcher identified above. You are being asked to volunteer since you meet the requirements for participation in this study. Your participation is voluntary, which means you can choose whether or not you want to participate. You may withdraw any time without penalty. If you decline to continue, any data gathered to that point may be used in data analysis. Before you can make your decision, you will need to know what the study is about, the possible risks and benefits of being in this study, and what you will have to do in this study. The researcher is going to talk to you about the study, and give you this consent form to read. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form.

Purpose: The study for which you are being asked to participate is designed to understand the environmental characteristics of exemplar higher education institutions that have consistently created and implemented adaptive solutions to significant challenges.

Procedure: To be a voluntary participant in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview regarding environmental characteristics of the institution that promote or detract from successfully navigating change initiatives.

Commitment and Compensation: Your total participation in the study will take approximately 80 minutes. You will not receive financial compensation for participation in the study.

Possible Risks & Benefits: It is expected that participation in this study will provide you with no more than minimal risk or discomfort, which means that you should not experience it as any more troubling than your normal daily life. However, there is always the chance that there are some unexpected risks. The foreseeable risks in this study include an accidental disclosure of your private information, or discomfort by answering questions that are embarrassing. If you feel uncomfortable or distressed, please tell the researcher and he will ask you if you want to continue.

Although you will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, your participation will help to improve knowledge about how change occurs in higher

education settings. Your participation may also benefit administrators and faculty at other institutions that are attempting to become more innovative in their approaches.

Confidentiality & Consent: The investigator involved with the study will keep your personal information collected for the study strictly confidential. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Your identity will be kept strictly confidential by assigning a pseudonym or a name of the participant's choosing. Data are stored in a locked cabinet with limited access. All transcripts with pseudonyms are kept in a secure and password protected file on the principal investigator's computer. Other than the principal investigator, the only parties that will have access to the research data are members of the dissertation committee.

This document explains your rights as a research subject. If you have questions regarding your participation in this research study or have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the principal investigator using the information at the bottom of this form. Concerning your rights or treatment as a research subject, you may contact the Research Integrity Officer at Azusa Pacific University (APU) at (626) 812-3034 or at dguido@apu.edu.

New Information: During the course of this study, the principal investigator may discover information that could be important to you. This includes information that, once learned, might cause you to change your mind about being in the study. The principal investigator will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

Conflict of Interest: The principal investigator has complied with the Azusa Pacific University Potential Conflict of Interest in Research policy.

Consent: I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I understand the procedures described above, and I understand fully the rights of a potential subject in a research study involving people as subjects. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this consent form.

I agree to be audio recorded
audio recorded

I do not agree to be
audio recorded

Participant Name Printed

Participant Name Signed

Date

I have explained the research to the subject or his/her legal representative and answered all of his/her questions. I believe he/she understands the information described in this document and freely consents to participate.

_____	_____	_____
Signature of Principal Investigator	Date	Time
Ben Thomas, Cand. Ph.D. 5520 108 th Ave NE Kirkland, WA 98083 425.889.7821 ben.thomas@northwestu.edu		

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Interview Protocol: President

Personal History

- 1) Your institution is known for being innovative and I am currently studying the characteristics of organizational environments that produce successful change on an ongoing basis. What comes to mind when I ask about how change occurs on your campus?

Experiences with Adaptive Change at the Institution

I would like to learn more about change initiatives that have occurred at the institution during the past few years.

- 2) During your presidency, could you describe a significant change initiative that resulted in success?
What was the impetus for the creation of this new initiative?
How were the ideas for the change initiated?
Who worked on this initiative and why were they selected?
How does your organization as a whole accept new ideas?
- 3) During the implementation phase of the change initiative, what were the biggest obstacles?
What other obstacles result from the environment or culture of the institution?
How did you (or the group) navigate these obstacles?
What would have happened if obstacles could not be overcome?
- 4) Could you describe one of the most difficult changes attempted that did not go as planned, was abandoned, or did not work as you hoped?
In what ways, if at all, do you think this failure influenced the overall environment of the institution?
- 5) What have been the major drivers for change at your institution?
What has been your role in driving change?
What do you think the typical faculty member would say was your role?

Institutional Environment

The next few questions address the organizational environment.

- 6) What do you think are the characteristics that exist within a university environment that allow for creative solutions?
What types of characteristics would restrict creative solutions?
- 7) On a scale of 1-10, 1 being innovative and 10 being risk averse, how would you rank the innovativeness of your university?
What things went through your mind as you considered choosing a number?
What would it take to move your institution to a 1?

- 8) How has your organizational environment shifted in relation to change during your presidency?
How has the executive culture shifted?
How has the faculty culture shifted?
How has the staff culture changed?
- 9) How have you recognized areas where significant change needed to occur?
How did you help people to recognize that change was needed in that area?
- 10) What assumptions, which were deeply held by people within the organization, have you had to challenge during your presidency?
What deeply held value that you hold about higher education have you had to challenge?
What was the impetus to challenge your own deeply held value?
What happens to people in the organization who raise questions that challenge deeply held assumptions?
How are these questions pushed up to executive levels?
- 11) What have you needed to learn during your tenure that has affected the way that you impact a culture to change?
- 12) Who in your organization is the most change-oriented?
How are they viewed in the organization?
In what ways are you a risk taker?

How does that approach impact the university environment?
- 13) In what ways do executive leaders shape the environment of this institution?
Which executive leader is the most change-oriented?
Who is the least?
How does their orientation toward change impact the environment?
What happens to people who resist collaborative, well-thought out change initiatives?

Conclusion

- 14) If you were advising a president who was inheriting an institution in crisis, how would you suggest working toward an environment that is conducive to change?
- 15) If you were advising a president who was inheriting a strong institution, what approach would you suggest to create an environment that is conducive to change?

Interview Protocol: Vice President

Personal History

- 1) Your institution is known for being innovative and I am currently studying the characteristics of organizational environments in higher education that produce successful change on an ongoing basis. What comes to mind when I ask about how change occurs on your campus?

Experiences with Adaptive Change at the Institution

I would like to learn more about change initiatives that have occurred at the institution during the past few years.

- 2) During your time at the university, could you describe a significant change initiative that resulted in success?
 - What was the impetus for the creation of this new initiative?
 - How were the ideas for the change initiated?
 - Who worked on this initiative and why were they selected?
 - How does your organization as a whole accept new ideas?
- 3) During the implementation phase of the change initiative, what were the biggest obstacles?
 - What other obstacles result from the environment or culture of the institution?
 - How did you (or the group) navigate these obstacles?
 - What would have happened if obstacles could not be overcome?
- 4) Could you describe one of the most difficult changes attempted that did not go as planned, was abandoned, or did not work as you hoped?
 - How did this failure impact the overall environment of the institution?
- 5) What have been the major drivers for change at your institution?
 - What has been your role in driving change?
 - What has been the President's role in driving change?

Institutional Environment

The next few questions address the organizational environment.

- 6) What do you think are the characteristics that exist within a university environment that allow for creative solutions?
 - What types of characteristics would restrict creative solutions?
- 7) On a scale of 1-10, 1 being innovative and 10 being risk averse, how would you rank the innovativeness of your university?

What things went through your mind as you considered choosing a number?

What would it take to move your institution to a 1?

- 8) How has your organizational environment shifted in relation to change during the past five years?

How has the executive culture shifted?

How has the faculty culture shifted?

How has the staff culture changed?

- 9) How have you recognized areas where significant change needed to occur?

How did you help people recognize that change was needed in that area?

- 10) What assumptions, which were deeply held by people within the organization, have been challenged during the past five years?

What deeply held value that you hold about higher education have you had to challenge?

What was the impetus to challenge your own deeply held value?

What happens to people in the organization who raise questions that challenge deeply held assumptions?

How are these questions pushed up to executive levels?

- 11) What have you learned in recent years that affected the way you impact a culture to change?

- 12) Who in your organization is the most change-oriented?

How are they viewed in the organization?

In what ways are you a risk taker?

How does that approach impact the university environment?

- 13) In what ways do executive leaders shape the environment of this institution?

What happens to people who resist collaborative, well-thought out change initiatives?

Conclusion

- 14) If you were advising an administrator who was transitioning to an institution in crisis, how would you suggest working toward an environment that is conducive to change?

- 15) If you were advising an administrator who was transitioning to a strong institution, what approach would you suggest to create an environment that is conducive to change?

Interview Protocol: Faculty/Staff

Personal History

- 1) Your institution is known for being innovative and I am currently studying the characteristics of organizational environments in higher education that produce successful change on an ongoing basis. What comes to mind when I ask about how change occurs on your campus?

Experiences with Adaptive Change at the Institution

I would like to learn more about change initiatives that have occurred at the institution during the past few years.

- 2) During your time at the university, could you describe a significant change initiative that resulted in success?
 - What was the impetus for the creation of this new initiative?
 - How were the ideas for the change initiated?
 - Who worked on this initiative and why were they selected?
 - How does your organization as a whole accept new ideas?
- 3) During the implementation phase of the change initiative, what were the biggest obstacles?
 - What other obstacles result from the environment or culture of the institution?
 - How did you (or the group) navigate these obstacles?
 - What would have happened if obstacles could not be overcome?
- 4) Could you describe one of the most difficult changes attempted that did not go as planned, was abandoned, or did not work as you hoped?
 - How did this failure impact the overall environment of the institution?
- 5) What have been the major drivers for change at your institution?
 - What has been the faculty role in driving change?
 - What has been the staff role in driving change?
 - What has been the President's role in driving change?

Institutional Environment

The next few questions address the organizational environment.

- 6) What do you think are the characteristics that exist within a university environment that allow for creative solutions?
 - What types of characteristics would restrict creative solutions?

- 7) On a scale of 1-10, 1 being innovative and 10 being risk averse, how would you rank the innovativeness of your university?
What things went through your mind as you considered choosing a number?
What would it take to move your institution to a 1?
- 8) How has your organizational environment shifted in relation to change during the past five years?
How has the executive culture shifted?
How has the faculty culture shifted?
How has the staff culture changed?
- 9) How have you recognized areas where significant change needed to occur?
How did you help people recognize that change was needed in that area?
- 10) What assumptions, which were deeply held by people within the organization, have been challenged during the past five years?
What deeply held value that you hold about higher education have you had to challenge?
What was the impetus to challenge your own deeply held value?
What happens to people in the organization who raise questions that challenge deeply held assumptions?
How are these questions pushed up to executive levels?
- 11) Who in your organization is the most change-oriented?
How are they viewed in the organization?
- 12) In what ways do executive leaders shape the environment of this institution?
What happens to people who resist collaborative, well-thought out change initiatives?

Conclusion

- 13) If you were advising an administrator who was transitioning to an institution in crisis, how would you suggest working toward an environment that is conducive to change?
- 14) If you were advising an administrator who was transitioning to a strong institution, what approach would you suggest to create an environment that is conducive to change?