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Presidential Fundraising: A Multiple Case Study of Rural Serving Oklahoma Community Colleges

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Presidential Fundraising:
A Multiple Case Study of Rural Serving Oklahoma Community Colleges

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Higher Education

by

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Abstract

Community college presidents serving rural populations in the state of Oklahoma have been forced to take on new responsibilities related to institutional fundraising due to multiple economic challenges including continued budgetary shortfalls and limited resource allocation. Review of the academic literature addressing this subject exposed a wide variety of rationales associated with this leadership shift, as well as successful presidential approaches to fundraising in modern higher education. This qualitative study of rural community college presidents in Oklahoma examined the rationale for expanded presidential roles in fundraising, while outlining a number of other essential roles, characteristics, professional backgrounds, and stressors that have affected college presidents. The study was conducted to explore, understand, and describe the perceptions of community college presidents in rural serving Oklahoma institutions as to their roles and involvement in fundraising, providing a foundational framework for community college presidents to follow as they establish possible solutions for the financial challenges they face.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate the completion of this project and my degree to the memory of the greatest educator I have ever known, my father, Dan Falkner. He gave his life to the education of others and gained great joy from student successes, both in the classroom, and in life. His list of accomplishments working with a wide variety of students for many years in public education is unmatched; yet, he took the greatest sense of personal pride in the years he was able to teach music at the collegiate level. It was a lifelong dream that he achieved in the later phase of his life. Although sickness took him away from the earth, his spirit lives on through the many students, colleagues, and communities he touched through his teaching. My academic achievement is owed to him. I hope you are proud “Old Man.”

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Chapter I

Introduction

Community colleges have contributed greatly to the growth of Oklahoma for many years. A recent report released by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) from the Battelle Technology Partnership Practice states “the estimated return on investment for Oklahoma public higher education is \$4.72 for every \$1 of state funding” (OSRHE, 2017). The report also explains “that the expenditures of the Oklahoma public higher education system generate \$9.2 billion in economic output impacts in the state and support more than 85,000 Oklahoma jobs” (OSRHE, 2017). Over half of the accredited public colleges currently operating in the state of Oklahoma are classified as community colleges (OSRHE, 2017). According to the Oklahoma Association of Community Colleges (OACC), Oklahoma community colleges “provide a wide range of quality, accessible, and affordable educational programs for high school graduates and adults of all ethnic and economic backgrounds” (OACC, 2017). These two-year institutions serve as “a powerful resource for economic and educational development providing relevant technical instruction in high-demand career fields” (OACC, 2017). Unfortunately, the functionality of such educational entities has been negatively impacted by various forces beyond student control.

Economic hardships in the state of Oklahoma have forced community college leaders to become more aggressive and creative in resource development through fundraising. State allocations to public higher education have been cut over 20% in the past three years due to drastic downturns in the state budget (OSRHE, 2017). The state currently faces a \$800,000,000 shortfall for the upcoming year, which has led to another systematic cut of 6.1% for the state higher education system, adding to the previous two-year total of nearly 20% (OSRHE, 2017).

These severe cuts have negatively affected funding for other state higher education programs including debt service repayments on building bonds, as well as concurrent education reimbursement programs. The reimbursement rate for concurrent education funding in Oklahoma has dropped from 66% to 26.8% (OSRHE, 2017). Unfortunately, Oklahoma community colleges will be affected more dramatically by the concurrent cuts due to the fact those institutions deliver the majority of concurrent educational offerings to eligible high school students (OSRHE, 2017).

“The continued reduction in state support for public higher education compromises our ability to produce the additional degrees required to meet Oklahoma’s workforce needs,” says John Massey, chair of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE, 2017). Massey concludes “while we recognize the extremely challenging budget environment, there is no question the cuts to higher education will negatively impact the ability of our colleges and universities to meet their academic missions” (OSRHE, 2017). “The State Regents and our colleges and universities continue to work tirelessly to keep higher education affordable for all Oklahomans,” says Chancellor Glen D. Johnson (OSRHE, 2017). Johnson continues “in light of successive years of budget cuts to higher education, moderate tuition and fee increases are necessary to enable public colleges and universities to meet mandatory costs” (OSRHE, 2017). “As university and college presidents, we take our tuition recommendation responsibility very seriously,” says Southwestern Oklahoma State University President Randy Beutler, who serves as chair of the Council of Presidents (OSRHE, 2017). President Beutler further explains:

Our students, faculty, staff and the future of Oklahoma are always foremost in our minds in reaching these difficult decisions. With higher education in our state sustaining cuts for three years in a row, it has been difficult for institutions to carry out their primary missions as the founders of Oklahoma envisioned. These modest tuition increases will not come close to replacing the decline of state appropriations to our public institutions,

but this action will help mitigate those losses until the state budget improves. (OSRHE, 2017)

Although Oklahoma's community colleges will increase in-state tuition and mandatory fee rates by an average of 7.1% for the 2017-2018 academic year, these institutions will still experience financial shortfalls associated with the deep cuts of state allocations (OSRHE, 2017). These fiscal hardships have forced Oklahoma community college presidents, especially in rural areas, to search for other revenue streams to fill the funding gap.

Statement of the Problem

The role of the community college president has transformed dramatically in recent years, due to internal and external pressures on resource development from multiple stakeholders. Decorated author and American higher education expert Jeffrey Selingo outlines many of these forces in his book, "College Unbound." One of the major highlights of this book is the section related to the disruptive forces in society that will change higher education forever. Selingo discusses five specific disruptive forces in detail that have changed the landscape of American higher education. These forces relate to the economic collapse of 2008, and include: institutional debt; disappearing state support for colleges and universities; dwindling numbers of students who pay full price for higher education; improvements in unbundled alternatives for student selection; and the growing gap in educational value (Selingo, 2013). All of these forces contribute to the growing student debt problem in American colleges and universities.

The trillion-dollar student debt problem is a major issue of concern for the future of higher education. According to Selingo (2013), "our current financial aid system cannot sustain itself and will eventually crumble" (p. 52). Selingo explains that excessive borrowing, student default on repayment, and institutional allowances to students at risk academically are all contributing factors to this eventual demise. Economic recession and downturns have plagued

most community colleges in this country over the last few years. Industrial declines, higher unemployment rates, lessened financial civic giving, and hikes to the cost of living have stabbed the heartland of America and caused great economic strains on individual institutions to bear the load of stability (Selingo, 2013). “University officials say high schools are producing fewer graduates -- and many of them are heading to out-of-state colleges -- at the same time a still-struggling economy is running up against higher college costs” (Sobota, 2014). These economic challenges have deeply shifted the operational landscape for community college presidents.

Community colleges continue to grow in terms of student enrollment and program services, yet funding resources from traditional sources continue to shrink (Strickland, 2013). “Community colleges face a further challenge when their graduates do complete a bachelor’s degree, as they must then compete with their four-year counter-parts for the attention and resources of their graduates” (Smith, Gearhart, & Miller, 2017, p. 5). Ryan and Palmer (2005) explain that “recurring economic recessions, uncertain levels of tax support, pressing fiscal demands of health care, K–12 education, and corrections have complicated the task of sustaining financial support for community colleges since the early 1970s” (p. 47). According to Shaw and Shaw (2008), the college presidency has grown from the visionary and motivational realms of leadership to encompass community activism, economic development, and fundraising. Bumphus (2014) explains that “fundraising, friendraising, and institutional advancement of the mission should serve as guiding compass points for presidents throughout the challenging complexities of the community college environment” (p. 10). Although there is a great deal of existing studies related to community colleges and presidential roles, less research consideration has been given to community college fundraising, specifically in rural serving areas.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, understand, and describe the perceptions of community college presidents in rural serving Oklahoma institutions as to their roles and involvement in fundraising. The new normal for community college presidents requires visionary leadership with limited resources to carry out the institutional mission (Bumphus, 2014). Evaluation measures for modern community college presidential success include endowment rates, alumni giving percentages, scholarship funding amounts, and capital campaign gains (Shaw & Shaw, 2008). Obtaining a greater understanding of the essential factors for practice in fundraising may provide a foundational framework for community college presidents to follow as they establish possible solutions for the financial challenges they face.

Research Questions

Maxwell (2005) details the need to develop qualitative research questions in case studies to explain the study focus, outline potential outcomes, and establish guiding principles. The following research questions were addressed in this case study to understand and explain community college presidential practice in fundraising:

1. How do community college presidents describe their professional roles in fundraising?
2. Which personal and professional characteristics do current rural community college presidents describe as necessary for effectiveness in fundraising?
3. How do current rural community college presidents describe prior fundraising experience as contributing to current and future fundraising success?
4. How do current rural community college presidents describe the impact of pressures for fundraising success on their overall presidential performance?
5. How do rural community college presidents describe their proudest fundraising

accomplishments?

Delimitations and Limitations

Self-imposed delimitation parameters were placed on the scope of this research study. Only rural Oklahoma community college presidents were included in this case study. Additionally, fundraising was the primary focus of the study, which excluded other funding possibilities associated with resource development. Selected participants must have had prior administrative experience and resided at their respective institutions for at least one year in leadership roles. Additionally, the institutions these presidential participants represent must have a fundraising presence through development foundation work.

Although the researcher took preventative action to minimize limitations throughout the study, there were various limitations including: time sensitivity, resource availability; nature of the research design; sample size; and geographic restriction (the state of Oklahoma), resulting in limited data for comparison and evaluation by community college presidents in other geographic regions of the United States.

Significance of the Study

Rural college administrators face heightened challenges in financial management areas due to unique service expectations in regions historically under-served by higher education (Williams, Pennington, Couch, & Dougherty, 2007). The future of these institutions will hinge on the innovative fundraising capabilities of top leaders in administrative capacities (Williams, et al., 2007). This study provided a thorough examination of multiple factors involving rural college presidents and fundraising experiences, processes, strategies, and principles. Study results could be utilized to develop and implement future effective fundraising strategies and practices, as well as aid in the hiring process for new rural community college presidents. Such

strategies should address the complex tasks and vital skills required for presidential attainment of fundraising goals.

Leaders of Oklahoma community colleges face unprecedented shortfalls in state funding allocations by the legislature (OSRHE, 2017). Information gleaned from this study of the current presidents of state rural serving community colleges could provide invaluable guidance in a challenging financial climate. Evidence of successful fundraising could mobilize Oklahoma community college leaders to build a foundational framework necessary for the sustainability and growth of individual institutions, as well as the entire system. Ballinger's (2012) study of presidential characteristics supports the theory that current fundraising behaviors are connected to past personal experiences, so study findings could prove to be beneficial for current and future administrators across the state through the examination of unique personal insight of experienced rural presidents who understand the complex nature of Oklahoma higher education.

Definition of Key Terms

Individual interpretation of similar terms may lead to differing understanding of key concepts of the study; therefore, definitions are provided below to clarify contextual understanding of the key terms used throughout the study.

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). This national association serves as the primary advocacy organization for nearly 1,200 membership community colleges while working with state policy makers to inform and affect positive change (AACC, 2017).

Chief Development Officer. College professional who is responsible for raising funds through fundraising, alumni relations, donation collection, trustee selection, and even grant competitions (Bok, 2013).

Community College. Educational institution that usually operates as a public, open-admissions

college that serves multifaceted purposes for host communities including two-year academic programming, technical education, vocational training, continued educational opportunities, and various outreach activities (Beach, 2011).

Community College President. The chief executive officer of a community college that carries multiple roles due to the institutional mission of smaller staffed, more inclusive student population needs (Beach, 2011).

Foundation. A partner organization to a college or university that is established to provide support through financial assistance, academic support, scholarship, and other means deemed necessary for the continued growth and success of the institution (Bok, 2013).

Fundraising. The process of investigation, research, location, development, and cultivation of funding sources from all available resources (Ryan & Palmer, 2005).

Oklahoma Association of Community Colleges (OACC). This state association represents 13 community college member institutions in 31 locations across the state of Oklahoma through political activism, economic development, business partnership, media outreach/public relations, and student advocacy (OACC, 2017).

Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE). The Oklahoma state governmental agency that oversees the state system of higher education, consisting of all institutions of higher education that are financially supported by direct legislative appropriations from the state government (OSRHE, 2017).

Resource Development. The process colleges follow to develop and prioritize successful activities and practices that generate revenue sources for the institution (Miller, 2013).

Rural Serving Community College. A unique educational institution type serving community college students in rurally isolated geographic regions traditionally under-served by education

programs (Williams, et al., 2007). Also, referred as rural community college.

Summary

Community colleges face tremendous fiscal challenges in the modern educational landscape due to multiple forces disrupting the operational effectiveness and efficiency of these staple institutions. Such challenges present severe obstacles to rural community colleges that traditionally provide higher education to underserved target market students. Reliance on external funding sources has become necessary for survival in difficult times. This shift of focus has led to a transformation of presidential roles in rural community colleges.

Presidents of rural community colleges must become innovators of fundraising efforts to protect the sustainability of the institutions they serve. Strategic fundraising initiatives will define the ultimate success or failure of presidents in this new world, as retention and graduation rates defined the success of past presidents. This qualitative multiple case study of presidential perceptions in the state of Oklahoma, combined with rural presidential approaches implemented to combat financial downturns in that geographic region, can serve as a resource guide for other presidents, future presidents, and current administrators serving similar populations.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Introduction

Four-year institutions have invested heavily into resource development through fundraising since the early development period of American higher education (Bok, 2013). However, community college presidents have not pursued fundraising with the same aggression and intensity as their four-year institutional colleagues. Santovec (2009) explains, “until recently, community college presidents did not consider fundraising as a major revenue source” (p. 8). Economic hardship has forced these community college leaders to implement new fundraising strategies including: property leasing, capital campaigns, alumni development, partnership building, and major gift collection. Unfortunately, while two-year institutions have attempted more fundraising execution, “limited experience, small staffs, and small development offices hamper their efforts” (Santovec, 2009, p. 8). This tense environment has caused great stress for community college presidents.

Community college presidents are affected by factors that determine their employment tenure, which can create harmful effects and dangerous scenarios between the college and the service community (Tekniepe, 2014). Increased stressors, ranging from heightened political divisiveness to financial hardships resulting from community polarization are forcing many current community college presidents to abandon the profession altogether, while discouraging future leaders from pursuing these jobs (Wallin & Johnson, 2007).

“A thoughtful and insightful discussion of related literature builds a logical framework for the research and locates it within a tradition of inquiry and a context of related studies” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 43). The purpose of this literature review was the examination

of presidential roles, personal characteristics, and the experiences and challenges faced by rural serving community college presidents in effectively raising funds for their institutions.

Obtaining a greater understanding of the essential factors for effectiveness in fundraising may provide a foundational framework for community college presidents to follow as they establish possible solutions for the financial challenges they face.

Scope of the Search

The literature gathered for this review was collected from the University of Arkansas Library Database and the University of Arkansas Library research assistance program. All full-text peer-reviewed articles were obtained using specific search related queries through the EBSCOhost Academic Libraries databases. Initial searches were conducted through the following established parameters: search terms related to college presidency, community colleges, and fundraising; scholarly peer-reviewed resources; and publication periods between 1998 and 2016. Search results were then studied to identify thematic consistencies, as well as differences in the literature. The results provided an extensive foundational case for the rationale supporting presidential leadership shifts toward fundraising, while outlining effective practice in the area. The following terms were used to search for peer-reviewed articles, books, reports, and other literature sources: presidential roles in fundraising; college fundraising; community college fundraising; institutional fundraising; two-year fundraising; presidential roles; community college presidents; and rural serving community colleges.

Organization of the Literature Review

An extensive study and analysis of the literature affiliated with institutional fundraising and college presidency produced a wealth of resources for this review. The body of academic work identified in the search was then sorted and organized in accordance for the purpose of the

review to identify multiple factors for presidential practice in community college fundraising. Factors chosen for this review included presidential roles in fundraising, presidential characteristics for successful fundraising, presidential fundraising background, presidential fundraising pressure, and rural community college information.

Presidential Roles in Fundraising

The challenging roles of community college presidents have become more complex with evolving demands from the target markets they serve. “People with money, power, and influence want to have ready access to the president of the college before, during, and after their contribution” (McGee, 2003, p. 43). In fact, Stevick (2010) argued that college presidents should follow the corporate model for integration of sales and marketing in fundraising efforts through the development and implementation of mission statements, marketing plans, foundational job descriptions, performance evaluations, and annual reports.

Bakhit (2011) conducted a qualitative study of community college presidents in the state of California to examine the ways these leaders utilized constructs of Resource Dependency Theory (RDT) to overcome declining economic funding from the state. Her sample consisted of nine community college presidents across the state of California who had at least a two-year tenure in their presidential positions. She interviewed each of these participants in semi-structured formats to determine what resource development strategies were implemented to combat funding declines, as well as “the extent to which resource development strategies aligned with resource dependency theory” (Bakhit, 2011, p. 13). Her findings supported the evolving need for resource development in community colleges under the direction of presidential involvement. According to Bakhit (2011), “the results demonstrate the presidents’ responses to the decline of funding and surrounding issues show an understanding that mirrors the constructs

of RDT's characterization of resource dependency in organizations" (p. 158). However, Bakhit also concluded that the presidents' activities related to resource development were not comprehensive in nature as outlined by Resource Dependency Theory.

Gentile (2009) conducted a qualitative study of community college presidents in her home state of New Jersey to determine successful fundraising patterns and perceptions that were utilized to combat financial crisis in the state. Her sample consisted of nine New Jersey community college presidents from various target market areas across the state. She utilized a semi-structured, one-to-one interview technique, as well as observation and document reviews of public information related to institutional finances. Her findings identified two common themes: presidents with more years of experience at their prospective institutions received more private and public monetary gifts; and colleges who implemented strategic fundraising planning were more successful in campaigns.

Gentile's research did produce new perspectives in the fundraising efforts of community colleges. The decrease in the average age of community college students has produced new challenges for presidents serving this shifting student population. Cultural shifts have forced presidents to allocate precious funds to previously considered fringe amenities in order to stay competitive from a recruitment perspective in target market areas. According to Gentile (2009), "these younger students expect additional services, such as costly fitness centers and athletics programs, when space and faculty are at a premium" (p. 9). Additionally, presidents are currently cutting expenses by reducing academic offerings and utilizing adjunct faculty members, while becoming more entrepreneurial through the leasing of vacant building space and facility usage. Overall, Gentile found consistencies in the difficulties of community college fundraising efforts due to the fact that, "while more community colleges are getting into major

gifts and capital campaigns, small staffs and small development offices significantly hamper their efforts” (Gentile, 2009, p. 8).

According to Santovec (2009), Jones conducted a qualitative study of the top 12 fundraising community colleges across the nation as determined by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education and the Council for Aid to Education. “Aligning her study with one conducted in New York in 1989, Jones conducted a qualitative study of chief development officers through interview processes and institutional reviews to identify factors affecting fundraising success” (Santovec, 2009, p. 9). Jones found the following factors for fundraising success throughout her study: the positive viewpoint of a college's image within its community; legacy of fundraising presidents; the amount of institutional budget and staff dedicated to fundraising efforts; and focus on fundraising strategic plans. Interestingly, according to Santovec (2009), “fundraising success didn't correlate with either the wealth of the community, presidential background or size of the school” (p. 9).

Miller (2013) conducted a multiple case qualitative study of Michigan community college presidents to examine their roles in fundraising. The one-on-one interviews of four presidents were conducted to examine the perspectives of overall fundraising leadership roles, leading the development team, donor relationships, and necessary skills and abilities for effective fundraising. Miller also used “Resource Dependence Theory” for the theoretical framework for his study stating, “organizations will place an emphasis on developing or prioritizing the activities that generate revenue for the organization” (p. 28). Although the study purposefully included a variety of community college types, common themes were produced: presidents must take the lead role in fundraising efforts; presidents must maintain the lead role on fundraising teams, regardless of development staff size and support; presidents must build relationships with

current and potential donors; and all presidential respondents agreed that the ability to personally connect with people on an individual level is the most necessary attribute for fundraising leaders.

Karnes (2008) conducted a qualitative field study of 10 community college vice presidents in California who were preparing for presidency job advancement opportunities. The purpose of the study was to create a global understanding of the “transitional considerations” of such individuals related to fundraising concerns in the fiscally challenging landscape of California community colleges. Interview questions focused on the negative transitional considerations of fundraising for respondents, as well as the oppressive aspects of fundraising in presidential roles.

The study results gathered through a combination of computer/human coding analysis, produced significant participant findings on both positive and negative transitional considerations of presidential roles in fundraising. Positive transitional considerations included the president’s ability to create substantive change; enact institutional visions; embrace diversity; increase learning success; and survive an evolving landscape in the target market. Negative transitional considerations included too much involvement in fundraising; external focus instead of internal focus; too many personal obligations and commitments; greater possibility of relocation; difficulties in institutional assimilation and campus fit; and resistance from multiple constituencies. Karnes’ study concluded that the vice presidential respondents had little or no consensus on the general expectations and requirements of fundraising at the presidential level.

Goodman (2015) conducted a quantitative survey of minority-serving community college presidents to examine the fundraising practices of college presidents, as well as the presidents’ perceptions of board of trustees’ expected involvement in fundraising activities. Much like Miller (2013), using “Resource Dependence Theory” for a framework for the study, Goodman

(2015) conducted a sample survey of minority-serving community college presidents across the United States. There were 361 presidents chosen from the original sample, producing 111 respondents (30% response rate) who were mailed surveys for completion. Survey questions were designed to determine if there was a relationship between the presidential time spent fundraising and the following: endowment levels; fiscal goal attainment inclusion in performance evaluations; and board of trustees' level of involvement in fundraising activities.

The survey findings suggested that although a significant number of the presidential respondents (60%) spent over 20 hours per week engaged in fundraising activities, there were no substantial increases in institutional endowments related to this activity. However, the results did determine there was a significant statistical relationship between presidential time spent fundraising and positive performance evaluation, as well as heightened fundraising involvement from board of trustees members.

Besikoff (2010) conducted a qualitative study of three Midwest community college presidents, who all had successful track records in fundraising according to the Council for Aid to Education's Voluntary Support for Education Survey. His research goal was to identify successful presidential roles in fundraising efforts. Document study, observation, and interviews were conducted at each community college site focused on the following research question topics: (a) provided versus needed preparation/training for presidential fundraising roles; (b) how presidents rank fundraising in terms of importance; (c) how much time presidents dedicate to fundraising; (d) what fundraising activities are most effective in terms of monetary gain; (e) what fundraising activities present the greatest challenges; and (f) how relationships are cultivated with development/foundational staff members.

All presidential respondents agreed that their previous positions did not provide adequate

training and preparation for fundraising expectations associated with the presidency. Additionally, all respondents expressed frustration with the lack of professional development opportunities related to community college fundraising. Each presidential respondent described the importance and necessity of fundraising in his/her respective roles, yet none of the respondents claimed that this was their top priority as presidents. The other common theme among all respondents was the massive time commitment expectations of presidents during fundraising activities and campaigns. Unanimously, the respondents agreed that the community college president must be the central force in fundraising in terms of campaign development, communication with constituencies, organization of specific tasks and assigned responsibilities, and follow-through with donors. Finally, regardless of institutional size and development support structures, respondents concluded that the ultimate fundraising responsibility lies in the hands of the president.

Garcia (2009) conducted a mixed methods study of presidents and fundraising professionals from 50 Texas public community colleges to determine the status and sophistication of fundraising efforts in those institutions. Initially, a survey was distributed to 163 community college fundraising leaders, resulting in 49 respondents (30% response rate) across the state of Texas. The second phase of the study included in-depth telephone interviews with a limited number of respondents to gather deeper information related to the research questions. Research questions were designed and implemented to focus on community college areas of fundraising, including employed functions of fundraising activity; extent of coordination in fundraising efforts; designation of most effective functions and activities; significance of relationship between individual institutional factors and generation of funds.

Study findings indicated that larger institutions generate more fundraising dollars, even

though smaller colleges have greater institutional wealth. However, the study explained that institutional wealth does not always transfer into greater fundraising dollars. Other study findings described the highest correlation of fundraising effectiveness lies with institutional factors, including grant development, geographic location, overall enrollment, and administrative leadership. Although the study was comparative and not predictive by design, the results did produce evidence supporting the strategy of relationship building with potential donors from institutional leadership as the primary fundraising objective in community colleges.

Curry, Rodin, and Carlson (2012) conducted a mixed methods study of Christian institutions of higher education to identify best practices in fundraising efforts. Their survey and interview methods were conducted with a sample of Christian college and university administrators from across the United States. The web-based survey and phone/internet interviews were carried out in the fall of 2009, and produced a response rate of 32.7%.

The focused research on best practices in fundraising produced the following common themes: there was a correlation between higher fundraising performance among the sample institutions through increased emphasis on relationship building and face-to-face meetings with donors; and institutions experienced more fundraising success through the development and integration of communications/public relations strategies that were more missional than appeal-driven. Additionally, the interview results identified the following common challenges for the sample: lack of leadership development; declining demographics; concerns related to financial affordability; and weak management systems. According to Curry, et al., (2012), “overall institutional performance is related to a transformational approach to development work built on a compelling vision that is communicated clearly” (p. 251).

Proper, Caboni, Hartley, Harold, and Willmer (2009) conducted a quantitative study to

“examine the effects of institution-specific factors that are within the control of the advancement office, on the outcomes of fundraising efficiency and total dollars raised” (p. 35). Data sources used for the study came from survey results conducted by the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). Surveys were mailed to 555 private, four-year institutions that were members of CIC, resulting in 274 respondents. Survey questions focused on alumni relations, fundraising, marketing, communications and enrollment management. The dependent measures used in the data analysis were fundraising efficiency and total dollars raised. “The fundraising efficiency measure was constructed as the ratio of spending on advancement to dollars raised” (Proper, et al., 2009, p. 36). “Independent variables used as controls included geographic region, degree of urbanization, Carnegie classification, whether the institution is an HBCU, endowment at the beginning of the year, total tuition and mandatory fees, institutional age and several enrollment variables” (Proper, et al., 2009, p. 36). Data gathered from the sources were then merged and analyzed using Excel and Stata programs.

Results indicated that older, more established colleges and universities generate more money from fundraising campaigns than newer institutions. Furthermore, surveyed institutions with larger total staff and faculty numbers gain more money in fundraising efforts. The researchers suggested that their findings identified the most efficient institutional fundraising strategy was to gain deferred gifts from donors, yet most participants did not currently engage in such practices. Another finding from the study contradicts the shared belief of many presidents that endowment size is key to success. According to Proper, et al., (2009), “endowment size does not affect 'bang for the buck;' in other words, less-endowed institutions are just as efficient at raising funds” (p. 41). The study also shed new light in the chase for donors. The study

concluded that many presidential fundraisers discount the recruitment of new, less affluent donors, and this attitude could be detrimental to the fundraising process. “Acquiring new donors, who usually give small amounts, may cost as much as it raises; however, without this activity, fundraisers cannot engage in more lucrative practices such as securing major gifts from established donors” (Proper, et al., 2009, p. 41).

Myers, Davis, Schreuder, & Seibold (2016) conducted a mixed methods study that centered on organizational identification (OID) and how it impacted student success in higher education pursuits. The study used social identity theory (SIT) as a philosophical framework for the mixed design, which incorporated student surveys and interviews for data collection and analysis. The goal of this study hinged on a widely accepted belief that student connection to the institution results in higher academic achievement. The researchers (Myers, et al., 2016) explained:

Identifying aspects of undergraduate experience that are associated with OID offers the potential to garner useful information for universities, potentially informing policy and planning decisions regarding funding and support for programs, clubs, and events—all possibly positively influencing student engagement and retention. (p. 212)

The researchers attempted to define these connections between students and their respective institutions, while identifying how those connections affect later interactions in terms of alumni relations, donations, and volunteerism. According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), “representativeness is the degree to which the sample accurately represents the entire population” (p. 170).

The researchers clearly defined the student sample, which consisted of 555 undergraduate students, as a representative cohort of the larger student demographic population. The construction of the survey instrument was designed containing questions stemming from fundamental elements of social identity theory. Study results concluded that student connections

were essential for long-term success for all parties involved in the higher education process, utilizing mixed methods based solidly in theoretical foundations and principles. Furthermore, findings from the study supported the institutional need to help establish significant student relationships through student affairs activities, as well as the potential impact for future growth through alumni development and donations.

Presidential Characteristics for Successful Fundraising

Presidents, serving as the “face” of their respective institutions, must develop the characteristics needed to carry the bulk load of responsibility in fundraising relationship building. Hodson (2010) illustrates the importance of personal recognition from the president for donor appreciation in giving situations, no matter the gift size or purpose. Giving opportunities are limited in terms of occurrence, so the community college president must possess the ability to understand the needs and rewards for potential donors while staying prepared to capitalize at the right time (Wenrich & Reid, 2003).

Duncan (2014) conducted a quantitative correlational study of community college presidents in Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina to investigate the fundraising profiles of community colleges while examining the relationship between presidential leadership aspects and fundraising efforts. The survey was sent to 97 community college presidents in the selected region, producing 42 respondents (43% return rate). The transformational concept of “Authentic Leadership,” which includes the four core components of self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency, was used as the theoretical framework for the study and survey design. The level of presidential involvement in fundraising and the total funds raised were incorporated as the dependent variables in the survey design. Independent variables included the degree of authentic leadership displayed and the years of

presidential service for each respondent. Questions on this self-assessment survey focused on authentic traits in: (a) presidential leadership, (b) development foundation structure, (c) institutional fundraising practices, (d) presidential roles in fundraising, (e) amount of funds raised, (f) funding sources, and (g) utilization of funds raised.

Survey results indicated that the majority of respondent schools were forced to become more aggressive in external fundraising efforts due to decreased allocations in state budget appropriations and corporate giving. However, the study found that there was no significant correlation between community college goals in fundraising areas compared to the actual dollars received from fundraising campaigns. Additionally, study results revealed that there was no significant relationship between authentic leadership and presidential involvement in the fundraising process, as well as weak correlation between presidential years of service related to involvement in fundraising. Moreover, the data proved that extended years of presidential service led to decreased interaction with development foundations in terms of meeting attendance, committee participation, and board interaction.

Plinske and Packard (2010) conducted a quantitative study using a three-phase Delphi process to “explore the beliefs of experienced community college trustees in the state of Illinois regarding characteristics, competencies, and professional experiences considered essential for future community college presidents” (p. 291). The survey sample was selected from the 312 community college trustees in the state of Illinois, narrowing it to locally elected, non-student trustees resulting in 41 eligible respondents, representing 23 of the 39 community college districts in the state of Illinois (59%). Three research question areas for future community college presidents were addressed through the study, including critical characteristics, critical competencies, and critical professional experience.

Participants in the Plinske and Packard study identified 13 general competencies, eight communication skills, and 12 leadership skills that they considered to be most important for future community college presidents to demonstrate. Study results listed “understanding of community college funding,” specifically in the area of fundraising, as the third highest prioritized competency among all respondents. In fact, many of the surveyed trustees suggested a preference for incoming college presidents from the private business/financial sector who carried successful backgrounds in fundraising initiatives.

Caboni (2010) conducted a quantitative survey study to examine environmental conditions surrounding development officers in colleges and universities. He drew his study sample from members of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), which resulted in a final sample size of 803 (7.7%) subjects. A total of 295 (36.7% response rate) questionnaires were gathered in the data collection stage of the study. The research question for this study focused on the potential for normative structure in collegiate fundraising.

Analysis of the data resulted in a finding of six conclusions related to normative structure in fundraising: (a) moral boundaries in fundraising practice do exist; (b) fundraisers in higher education use norms to self-regulate, resulting in heightened professionalism; (c) identified normative patterns protect the welfare of institutional and donor clients; (d) norm stability exists in multiple levels of fundraising campaigns; (e) socialization to the fundraising profession is key for establishing norms; and (f) the ethical code for the CASE subjects should contain more specific language to describe fundraiser responsibility to the institutional client (Caboni, 2010, p. 361-362).

Presidential Fundraising Background

According to the article, “FUNDraising from the top” (2008), “sophisticated donors can

spot amateurish fundraising operations very quickly; good quality programming begets successful fundraising efforts” (p. 30). Donors want to see tangible results for their investments, such as physical structures, scholarship recipients, and increased equipment/supplies through academic enrichment programs (Hodson, 2010). Yet, the majority of newly appointed community college presidents lack significant fundraising experience in their professional backgrounds (Glass & Jackson, 1998), and very few possess extensive business operational skills due to their traditional pathways to the presidency from academic origins.

Ballinger (2012) conducted a quantitative study of community college presidents in the North Central Association’s Higher Learning Commission network to investigate how the backgrounds of current community college presidents relate to their fundraising behaviors. “Leadership Theory” was used for the theoretical framework of the study, as well as the survey design model. The survey was distributed online to 346 community college presidents, resulting in 104 respondents (30% response rate). Research questions for the survey included the following fundraising topics: behaviors in fundraising of current community college presidents; how those behaviors related to individual background characteristics; and how those background characteristics can predict future fundraising behaviors.

The study results supported Ballinger’s hypothesis that there was a strong connection between current fundraising behaviors and individual backgrounds of the presidents. The highest connection scores came from presidents who were former development professionals, as well as presidents at other institutions. Furthermore, scores reflected higher prioritization on fundraising from presidents with development backgrounds, as opposed to those serving presidents from academic backgrounds who did not score as highly in fundraising importance survey areas. Ballinger concluded that pathway shifts in community colleges seeking financial

incentives in leadership due to their independent fiscal needs may choose presidential candidates from development backgrounds instead of the traditional approaches geared toward academic experts to ensure fundraising as the primary priority in operations management.

In her qualitative collective case study, Brunen (2012) examined the impact of previous fundraising experience in relation to achieved success on a select group of community college presidents. The three presidents selected for the case study were personally interviewed on the topic of fundraising in the presidency, specifically connected to the research questions. Research question one centered on the impact of previous fundraising experience on presidential roles, while research question two focused on valuable fundraising skills and competencies, and research question three asked for fundraising advice for future community college leaders. Results provided evidence of the increased presidential focus on fundraising ranging from 15% to 65% of total work time dedicated to the issue. Central themes in the findings all related to the increased necessity of presidential fundraising for fiscal stability and sustainability in modern higher education.

Strickland (2013) conducted a comparative qualitative study of 19 community college presidents (10 from development backgrounds and nine from traditional academic backgrounds) to address the deficit of knowledge in development backgrounds related to success in the community college presidency. The researcher used the theoretical framework of “Resource Dependency Theory” to determine whether those presidents from external, non-academic backgrounds were more successful leading their institutions in a fiscally-driven/fundraising-sensitive collegiate environment than those presidents from more traditional academic leadership backgrounds. Interview questions centered on fundraising knowledge, management styles, backgrounds, previous experience, and related common responsibilities. Results provided

support for the former external professionals in terms of successful fundraising activities in presidential roles. Strickland (2013) determined the presidents with academic backgrounds struggled consistently with fundraising in the early stages of their presidencies due to their lack of preparation, practice, and prioritization. However, the study results indicated no major differences in overall success, determined by tenure rates and described job satisfaction, between the comparison groups.

Pinchback (2011) conducted a cross-sectional quantitative study of community college presidents in the Southern Regional Educational Board Region located across 16 states to evaluate respondent knowledge and experience in fundraising while distinguishing if the presidential job duties in fundraising areas have changed substantially over time. Survey requests were mailed to 342 community college presidents in the selected region, resulting in 146 participants (42% response rate) completing the survey either electronically or in paper form. Research questions for the survey focused on the following fundraising areas: (a) presidential professional background; (b) previous fundraising experience; (c) success evaluation in terms of generated funds; (d) opportunity for professional development/training; (e) relationships between enrollment size and years of experience; (f) division of time allotments for specific constituencies; and (g) resource availability and allocation.

The study found that even though greater priority has been placed on fundraising at the community college level, the majority of incoming community college presidents are still administrators from the academic arena, generally possessing little or no fundraising experience in their individual backgrounds. In fact, results concluded that fundraising experience is not even a top-tier priority for boards and hiring committees in the presidential selection process. The results also indicated that the majority of respondent institutions place little emphasis on

fundraising success in presidential evaluations related to work performance. Additionally, the majority of presidential respondents claimed that they received little or no support in fundraising efforts from their institutional boards of trustees.

Presidential Fundraising Pressure

High expectations for job performance, unrealistic external pressures, and relentless work schedules present major challenges to modern community college presidents, particularly in rurally isolated regions. Job security is constantly threatened by the changing tides of political pressure, diminishing funding, and demanding constituents. As a result, many community college presidents have left positions prematurely, leaving a great void in much needed leadership (Tekniepe, 2014).

Tekniepe (2014) conducted a quantitative study, using the Push/Pull Theory as a methodological framework, to determine how the fiscal pressures placed on community college presidents affected their job performance. Survey data was collected from a random cross-sample of 12 presidents from 101 community colleges across 34 states using an electronic web-based survey questionnaire. The survey was developed using information gathered from contemporary leadership turnover literature and contained questions related to presidential pressures within individual positions. The dependent variable measured in the survey was the type of college president departure (termination, resignation, retirement), while the independent variables were political conflict between the governing board and college president, internal pressures from the professoriate and subunits within the organization, external pressures from community stakeholders, and fiscal stress.

“The analysis reveals that increases in political conflict, internal pressures, external stakeholder demands, and fiscal stress have statistically significant effects on college president

turnover” (Tekniepe, 2014, p. 158). The study results provided correlation between internal and external political pressures and early departure from presidential positions. Additionally, the results supported the establishment of presidential prioritization in fundraising as a way to combat fiscal pressures while ensuring job security. According to Tekniepe (2014), presidents must “take an entrepreneurial standpoint toward implementing effective and efficient budget management processes, along with expanding traditional revenue streams such as fundraising, to help ensure a college's future in difficult economic times” (p. 159).

Wallin and Johnson (2007) conducted a quantitative study to gain a better understanding of employment risks associated with the community college presidency, including termination and/or demotion, as well as the potential post-presidency pathways for current community college presidents. The researchers administered an online survey to 299 chief academic officers at institutions identified as having a change in CEO between 2003 and 2006, which produced 97 participant responses (32.4% response rate).

The survey data results indicated that 57% of respondents agreed there was high risk associated with the presidency position due to the following factors: circumstances beyond the president’s control; political significance in professional relationships; maintaining balance of competing interests; constant stress; and potential for job loss. Other data results gathered supported the high-risk findings: 42% of community college presidents retired and did not seek other employment positions; 17% moved to another community college presidency or chancellorship; 15% found a community college position other than a presidency; 18% found other jobs in higher education; and 8% obtained positions in fundraising or consulting.

Rural Community Colleges

Rural community colleges represent a unique educational institution type serving

community college students in rurally isolated geographic regions traditionally under-served by education programs (Williams, et al., 2007). According to Miller and Tuttle (2006), “about one-fifth of the United States population lives in what could be defined as a rural location, even though 85% of U.S. geography is defined as rural” (p. 56). Rural community colleges serve as the town centers for many communities they serve, providing educational opportunities, job training, small business development, contract training, and even economic planning (Miller & Tuttle, 2006). “They are more important to the rural community because there are fewer competitors for community attention” (Miller & Tuttle, 2006, p. 65). These institutions play integral roles in the deep development of self-identity for the individuals they serve. Miller and Tuttle (2006) explained, “people who grow up and live near a college, such as a rural community college, have a fundamentally different outlook or vision of life, pride, and self-identity” (p. 58).

Although rural community colleges provide positive results for the students and communities they serve, several obstacles present difficulties to operational effectiveness and student success in terms of retention and degree completion. Unique barriers to educational success including geographic isolation, lack of resources, and social bias create challenging educational environments for rural college administrators (Carter, 2014). Students in these target markets are less likely to hold degrees, complete high school graduation requirements, and maintain access to resources (Miller & Tuttle, 2006). Rural community college presidents must maintain multi-faceted roles within the institutions they serve in order to successfully educate this target student population.

Carter (2014) conducted a quantitative study to examine the obstacles for student enrollment in rural community colleges. Her study began by defining rural community colleges and the typical student population served by these institutions. She surveyed 170 students

enrolled in two rural community colleges in the Midwest geographic region of the United States using a purposeful sampling method. The research questions for the study related to attendance barriers, gender-based barriers, income status, first-generation designation, and enrollment time periods immediately upon high school graduation versus postponed enrollment.

Descriptive statistical analytical methods were utilized by the researcher to break down survey answers provided by the study respondents. T-tests were then applied to survey answer data to distinguish and describe differences in respondent information. Survey results showed that factors including student cumulative grade point averages, financial aid eligibility, and parental past association with rural community colleges all played pivotal roles in successful enrollment in rural community colleges.

Eddy (2013) conducted qualitative research on the various challenges to leadership development in rural community colleges due to limited resources, geographic location, and an aging leadership population. She explained how the American Association for Community Colleges (AACC) had identified these key obstacles to leadership development and developed a strategic education plan to guide leadership development in rural institutions. According to Eddy (2013), the AACC identified six essential competencies for successful professional development in rural serving institutions including: organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy, and professionalism.

The purpose of Eddy's study was to focus on the development of pertinent skills for rural community college leaders defined by the AACC identified areas for success, as well as how prior development influenced current competency execution. She found that due to multiple factors including cost, time limitations, and training/development opportunities, most of the leader participants learned more on the job than in formalized educational settings. Additional

findings supported the case that professional advancements were achieved more through relationship cultivation and personal interactions, rather than organized professional development.

Thompson (2016) conducted a qualitative case study of rural community college leaders who completed “grow-your-own” (GYO) leadership development programs. He tracked a volunteer participant cohort group of 10 program completers for two years to see how effective the training program had been followed according to participant data. The American Association of Community Colleges Leadership competency model and situated learning theory were the guiding conceptual framework pieces for the study. Research questions for the study examined leadership knowledge, skills, and participant behaviors gained from the GYO training.

Triangulation strategies were implemented to organize data gathered from personal interviews, institute artifacts, and other pertinent participant documentation. Constant comparative analysis was the selected form of methodology for the study which was used to identify themes in the data. Findings indicated that participants did indeed benefit from the leadership training they received in the GYO model. In fact, participants claimed to use the education gained from the programs in several facets of their respective lives including professional development, daily occupational work, and even personal growth.

Similarities and Differences in Research Findings

Research findings from this literature review revealed both similarities and differences among the various studies related to presidential fundraising and community colleges. Further discussion of these areas will provide support for the review conclusion, as well as the need and purpose of this qualitative study.

Similarities

The literature presented a case of consensus for essential leadership responsibilities in presidential roles at community colleges and universities. According to Shaw and Shaw (2013), a president must be the face of the institution in fundraising efforts; establish a strong fundraising leadership team focused on the institutional strategic plan; and work with all stakeholders to communicate fundraising goals clearly and succinctly. Bumphus (2014) concurred, “leaders must be able to build relationships within their communities by selling a vision that will resonate with external partners and move them to support the college financially” (p. 10). Ryan (2003) addressed these common presidential fundraising responsibilities, including the need to be the administrative face to the community, selecting key development personnel, and engagement with the board of trustees in fundraising efforts. He added that presidents must work with marketing and campaign professionals to launch and complete successful capital gains campaigns for additional project funding. According to Ryan and Palmer (2005):

presidents should remain active in the community by becoming involved on the boards of area nonprofit agencies and otherwise honing networks that will increase the visibility of the college and identify possibilities for mutual action between the college and key constituencies. (p. 47)

New community college presidents could benefit greatly from personal study of these defined key leadership responsibilities.

Another theme that developed through this review centered on the necessity of inclusion for external and internal constituencies through presidential performance. Bumphus (2014) characterized the need to inspire external and internal stakeholders in the pursuit of institutional goals as a top priority for fundraising presidents. White (2011) stated, “the president/CEO is the sole leader in the institution who must advocate for student success, getting buy-in and support from internal constituents and the external community” (p. 26). Glass and Jackson (1998)

determined “presidents should develop and articulate an institutional mission, create a climate of support from other institutional actors, and plan fundraising strategies” (p. 578). They also placed great emphasis on presidential giving as a fundraising strategy under the premise that potential donors are more inclined to give financially when the college president is willing to invest personally (Glass & Jackson, 1998). Feinberg (2012) also described the challenges associated with the multi-faceted CEO role of today's college presidents, which requires intense navigation of a network of constituencies including students, faculty, alumni, donors, legislators, community stakeholders, and business leaders. Presidents must utilize a balanced approach in fundraising efforts, so all parties involved can experience success through inclusion.

Differences

The major point of variation in the literature review tied to differing viewpoints among scholars concerning the president’s primary role in fundraising. Although the top institutional leaders must act as financial advocates with the boards of trustees and outside communities, White (2011) argued the primary fundraising focus for college presidents should lie in faculty development. Wenrich and Reid (2003) contended that the public relations functionality of the presidency is the primary key to success in fundraising in terms of ability relating to the media, as well as general community outreach. Feinberg (2012) claimed that most urgent role in fundraising for college presidents is that of a political strategist, due to governmental ties to institutional funding support levels. According to the article “Success and failure in the college presidency,” published in the *New England Journal of Higher Education* (2009), “development and fundraising should be delegated primarily to pros in those areas, while presidents use their office to engage the larger development enterprise that underscores the value and importance of the school” (p. 27). Hodson (2010) asserted the presidential priority in fundraising should lie in

setting institutional fundraising goals due to growing competition for resources within colleges and universities. Hodson (2010) cautioned “the list of university needs and priorities should not exceed the realistic expectations of what can be funded through institutional advancement” (p. 47). The literature provided strong evidence that academic experts in fundraising research still debate the primary roles and responsibilities of college presidents.

Conclusion

A number of research studies have been conducted in the subject area of institutional fundraising at the public and private institutions of higher education. Such studies outlined successful practices, funding formulas, institutional profiles, progressive campaign initiatives, and individual traits associated with presidential fundraisers that affect funding levels for colleges and universities. Hilbun’s (2013) multiple case study discussed institutional adaptive strategies aimed at focused fundraising efforts in a variety of areas included in the liberal arts collegiate arena. Whitaker’s (2005) comparative case study of private colleges described aggressive presidential approaches to fundraising through alumni relations campaigns, business partnerships, and trustee development in financially focused areas. Miller’s (2013) multiple case study examined and defined individual presidential competencies necessary for leading successful fundraising efforts at the community college level. Findings from these studies provided evidence that funding levels vary greatly among institutional types, including public, private, and community college distinction. Further explanation of the differences between institutional types concerning funding sources can provide greater insight into the broad fiscal landscapes of operation.

Private colleges and universities are funded substantially differently than public colleges and universities. Private colleges generally have a healthy mix of successful alumni members,

supportive local business and industry people, and influential community leaders who can lend financial support to the institution in a variety of ways (Ryan & Palmer, 2005). Privatized support affords these institutions freedom from the limiting restrictions and scrutiny associated with public funding agencies. Fundraising freedom allows private schools the opportunity to explore endless donor avenues, corporate partnerships, and unrestricted academic offerings (Ryan & Palmer, 2005). Unfortunately, compared to four-year institutions, conceptual uniformity does not exist in terms of funding levels for community colleges.

Public universities receive substantial funding through budgetary allocations gathered through tax collections at the state level, as well as federal funding and private giving (Bok, 2013). Federal funds shift periodically, while individual states control the funding formulas and allocations for public institutions, resulting in great discrepancies between the funding levels of colleges and universities across the country. The current volatile socio-economic and political climates continue to decimate federal and state budgets to the point where the growth of foundational support for public colleges will be the only offset to ensure survival and growth in the future (Murray, 2013).

Community colleges receive considerably less funding proportionately, even though these institutions continue to experience record enrollments and national attention related to service provision (Kent, 2012). “The latest Voluntary Support of Education (VSE) survey found that while community colleges served 19 percent of students enrolled at participating institutions, these institutions received less than 1% of reported philanthropic support” (Kent, 2012, p. 12). Oklahoma community colleges serve over 50% of total student enrollment in state public colleges and universities, while providing over 60% of all developmental education courses to students in need, yet these valuable institutions receive substantially less state allocation funding

dollars than four-year institutions according to the higher education funding formula established and maintained by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE, 2017). The article “Funding from the top” (2008) provides rationale that the disproportionate funding model, where community colleges have received less than 2% of the total funds donated to higher education, is due to a lag in the establishment of successful development programs.

Johnson (2015) explains:

Private fundraising has been a staple of private higher education for many decades; however, with less-developed alumni networks and traditionally more robust government funding, community colleges on the whole did not pursue private donors on any significant scale until after the turn of the 21st century. Eroded government funding, however, has increased the need for community colleges to consider other revenue streams in order to maintain affordable, accessible education without compromising quality. (p. 15)

Shaw and Shaw (2013) describe a new competitive landscape in higher education, where the difference between institutional survival and demise lies in the hands of leadership approaches to the establishment of fundraising cultures. Community college leaders must now become focused fundraisers to maintain competitive salaries, faculty development, and academic offerings (White, 2011). Institutional presidents act as the chief fundraisers for the colleges they represent, especially in community colleges that are funded significantly lower than other public and private colleges and universities in shared service areas.

According to “Funding from the top” (2008), community college presidents must advocate tirelessly within their service communities to raise awareness and money. These leaders deserve a body of relevant research to reference as they attempt to create fundraising strategies for their individual institutional needs. Regrettably, much less research consideration has been given to community college fundraising, especially

related to the presidency. The literature presented in this review serves as a resource base for this study of rural community college presidents.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore rural community college presidents in Oklahoma to understand and describe their roles and involvement in fundraising. A single-state, multiple case study was employed to gain comprehensive insight into the professional, political, and personal experiences of the presidential participants regarding fundraising in rural serving Oklahoma community colleges.

Research Design

The qualitative case study method was selected as the research design for this present study as it allows the researcher to study the phenomenon of interest from the perspective of the participants (Hatch, 2002). Yin (2014) defines a qualitative study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (p. 16). The intent of this study, grounded in data gathered from individual presidential experiences in the state of Oklahoma, furnished sound rationale for implementation of a qualitative research design. Creswell (2012) expounds that the employment of qualitative research design in studies is necessary when the research focus hinges on participants’ experiences related to research questions.

Qualitative research design is often an ongoing process of pliable components related to research methodologies and goals (Maxwell, 2005). Maxwell (2005) explains that qualitative designs are interactive by nature, with each component related to the other. Although this study was predicated on research methodology related somewhat to resource dependency theory, which served as a beginning point for theoretical development, the educational research, conducted in a qualitative format, gathered data to determine the theoretical framework.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), “most qualitative research inherently shapes or modifies existing theory” (p. 89). There was no pre-determined framework for the study so the inductive nature of the qualitative study defined itself through data driven findings (Hatch, 2002).

Case Study

“Case-oriented research seeks to understand human phenomena in all of their historical and contextual complexity” (Greene, 2007, p. 154). The case study data inquiry was the most appropriate approach for this study due to the need to understand Oklahoma rural community college presidents’ involvement in fundraising. Yin (2012) explains, “case studies are pertinent when your research addresses either a descriptive question or an explanatory question (p. 5).

Creswell (2007) defines case study research in the following terms:

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case-based themes. (p. 73)

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) characterize that case studies must include intrinsically bounded phenomena to truly qualify in that categorization. The purpose of this study to gain a deep understanding of rural community college presidential roles in fundraising efforts for their respective target markets, qualified within Merriam’s & Tisdell’s characterization due to the geographically limited scope (the single state of Oklahoma) of the research.

Several factors contributed to the rationale for choosing the case study method for this particular research. Case study designs allow greater data collection than other comparable research designs. “Data collection for case study research typically involves a variety of sources that may include data relevant to the case or cases” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 25).

Creswell (2012) acknowledges that case studies are preferred in many research circles because

the multiple data gathering sources provide deeper understanding of study subjects. Yin (2003) explains that lessons learned from the relevant case study model “will advance knowledge and understanding of a given topic” (p. 3). Case studies are often adopted in qualitative studies to match patterns through replication logic in multiple designs (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

A multi-case study was the most appropriate format for the research by reason of inclusion of all rural community college presidents in the selected geographic region of Oklahoma. “For many research questions, a theoretically rigorous study of a single state is more appropriate than a less rigorous design that includes all 50 states” (Nicholson-Crotty & Meirer, 2002, p. 412). Moreover, “a single-state case design may be appropriate when the unique characteristics of the state may make it a particularly desirable venue to test a theory” (Nicholson-Crotty & Meirer, 2002, p. 414). Oklahoma has a unique system of rural community colleges to study because of funding mechanisms outlined by state governmental authorities, as well as specific economic challenges.

Participants

The target participant population for this study consisted of all sitting presidents, excluding myself, from rural serving community colleges in the state of Oklahoma. These participants ranged from a variety of demographic categories, including age, ethnicity, gender, professional backgrounds, and years of experience. Due to the specific and unique nature of this study, homogenous/purposeful sampling selection was utilized to gain the greatest results. Creswell (2012) describes the multiple benefits of homogenous sampling through participant selection from similar subgroups of larger populations that share defined characteristics. According to Maxwell (2005), “particular persons are selected deliberately in purposeful sampling to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (p. 88).

There are nine community colleges in the state of Oklahoma that are classified as rural serving institutions (OSRHE, OACC). Although there is a total of 12 community colleges within the state, the research focus deemed the exigent area of interest lied in rural serving sectors. According to Creswell (2012), “the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individual or site” (p. 209). Thus, the sample size for this study included eight rural community college presidents (excluding myself) to ensure data depth and information detail that met the other selection criteria: experience and foundation.

The participant selection process identified potential participants from a regional pool of community college presidents provided by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) and the Oklahoma Association of Community Colleges (OACC). Due to mutual professional respect of the respondents and myself as a rural community college president, I personally contacted potential participants for inclusion in the study through phone communication, as well as the initial request for participation letter (Appendix A). Additionally, I gained approval from the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board (IRB) before the data collection process began.

Data Collection

Educational research increases understanding through question development, data collection, and the presentation of answers (Creswell, 2012). Each case study was executed in person with each president at a pre-determined meeting site. In-depth interviews were performed using open-ended questioning techniques as the primary data collection method. Data was collected and stored in various formats including: on paper, electronically, and through audio recording files saved to an external hard drive, which were destroyed after the transcription process was completed. Interview note taking was also utilized during data collection to ensure

study credibility. These selected collection methods were applied uniformly to gather in-depth data related to the presidential participants for further analysis.

Participation information was kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable state law and University policy. Information was collected by the Principal Investigator, and then transferred to an electronic medium, which was handled and stored securely. Data gathered in the individual case studies, including research notes, written transcripts, event records, records of correspondence, and secondary documents, were filed in safe and secure locations, with back-up storage copies in place to certify the protection of vital study information. All original paper and audio recording materials were destroyed once the transcription process was completed. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants before written and oral reports were prepared so links could not be established to involved individuals.

Researcher as Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the instrument for data collection, analysis, and reporting of findings. The interest in this topic resulted from personal experience as a rural community college president in the state of Oklahoma. I have first-hand knowledge of the fiscal challenges, political volatility, and fundraising pressure faced by rural serving community colleges in the state of Oklahoma. Although I am in the early stage of my presidency, my position has provided a wide lens to view the greater landscape of similar challenges for other community college presidents in the state. My association with the state council of presidents, as well as membership in the Oklahoma Association of Community Colleges provided access to other presidents of various institutional types within the public and private sectors of higher education, with whom I have established professional and personal relationships. My position granted a unique opportunity to conduct meaningful research through

qualitative methods that could help other community college presidents, who have turned to fundraising as a way to supplement state funding.

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, and the existence of close relationships with participants, the researcher served as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Researchers have the ability to respond and adapt interview questioning, approaches, and methodologies immediately, dependent on the individual circumstances of the interview being conducted (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, the researcher remained cognizant of personal perspectives related to the study subject matter during the interview process to monitor personal biases. “While subjectivity is not the focus of most qualitative studies, it is important for researchers to deal with their own potential influences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 17).

Field Testing

Two Oklahoma college presidents assisted in field testing the researcher’s semi-structured interview guide (Appendix D), a listing of primary questions that were used during interviews, prior to actual data collection. The two field test subjects were selected on the basis of their working knowledge of higher education in the state of Oklahoma at the presidential level, as well as their vast experience levels in institutional fundraising. One subject is a recently retired community college president of a rural serving institution in Oklahoma who was a successful fundraiser for many years in terms of dollars gained for the institution he served. The other subject is a current community college president in Oklahoma who serves in an urban target institution and has deep roots in fundraising.

Once the field test participants reviewed the request for participation letter (Appendix A), the informed consent form (Appendix B), and the participant profile demographic questionnaire (Appendix C), the researcher and participants met at confidential interview sites chosen by the

participants. Field test interviews were conducted in a similar format structure as the full study interviews. Throughout the interviews, the researcher recorded concerns noted by the subjects and made necessary changes to the interview guide (Appendix D) accordingly. Once the interview guide was properly field tested, an official request was sent to the University of Arkansas' Institutional Review Board (IRB) to guarantee participant safety and ensure ethical practice in the research. This field test process strengthened the case study through the development of better interview questions and strategies that were clear and succinct.

Interviews

Each study participant received the request for participation letter (Appendix A), and completed the informed consent form (Appendix B) and the participant profile demographic questionnaire (Appendix C) before interviews were held. Interviews were led with the selected study participants at pre-determined confidential locations. Each interview was conducted face-to-face in a semi-structured format with presidential participants so they could engage in open-ended questioning related to fundraising. According to Creswell (2012), "one-to-one interviews are ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, who are articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably" (p. 218).

Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes so the researcher was able to obtain information rich data, while respecting the time sensitivity importance of presidential participants. Each respondent was asked a series of open-ended questions listed on the interview guide (Appendix D). Development of a good interview guide should be based more on creativity and insight than mechanical measures (Maxwell, 2005). The researcher incorporated additional questions to seek clarification and probe for more detailed information when needed. The researcher followed Merriam and Tisdell's (2014) recommendation "to ask for relatively neutral,

descriptive information at the beginning of the interview” prior to asking “questions that access the interviewee’s perceptions, opinions, values, and emotions” (p. 125). The researcher obtained recorded permission from the participants regarding the intent to record interviews in various formats for the purpose of analysis. Verbal responses were recorded through digital recording methods (A MacBook recording program used in conjunction with a USB port recording microphone) overseen by the researcher, who also acted as the interviewer.

Additionally, the interviewer recorded written notes during the interviews to identify highlights and key points of interest for later analysis. Follow-up probes were attempted at various points during the interviews. Creswell (2012) suggests that probe questioning techniques help define answers more clearly and concisely while eliciting deeper information. Answers were verified by respondents throughout the interview process to maintain information accuracy, validity, and reliability.

Secondary Data Sources

Other data sources related to the participants were collected by the researcher to expand the scope of data analysis. “Collecting personal documents can provide a researcher with a rich source of information” (Creswell, 2012, p. 223). Additional sources included participant profile demographic questionnaires (Appendix C), resumes/curriculum vitae, institutional organizational charts, strategic plans, annual reports, development foundation information, and observation notes. These secondary sources were gathered from participant provision and researcher driven internet searches.

Document Analysis

All documents collected for the study were reviewed thoroughly by the researcher. Each interview was transcribed in written format after it was concluded. The written results were

taken and manually entered into a Microsoft Excel program spreadsheet for organization, analysis, and coding. Data tables were utilized at this point to establish patterns of similarities and variances between respondents. Information conversion of Excel spreadsheet findings to a usable Microsoft Word format then occurred for further analysis. Once this data was successfully converted to Word, applicable charts and tables were developed and designed for further review and analysis. Secondary documents were studied upon collection by the researcher and included in appropriate field notes and journals. Additionally, member checking (Appendix F) was applied throughout the interview process to ensure information was accurate and reliable. According to Maxwell (2005):

Respondent validation (member checks) is systematically soliciting feedback about your data and conclusions from the people you are studying. This is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspectives they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstanding. (p. 111)

Data Analysis

Inductive data analysis is a highly complex procedure involving the consolidation and interpretation of existing data, which requires the researcher to explore concrete and abstract concepts for evaluation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Data collected for this study, which included interview transcripts, presidential profiles, institutional organizational charts, strategic plans, development foundation information, observation notes, and annual reports were prepared and analyzed over the duration of the study. Results found from qualitative methods were gathered and organized in usable forms and then applied to various assessment and evaluation processes to support the research questions. Creswell's (2012) six steps in qualitative data analysis and interpretation were utilized at this phase of the study. These steps included "preparing and organizing data for analysis; engaging in an initial exploration of data through coding;

identifying findings and formulating themes; representing findings; interpreting meaning from findings, and validation of findings accuracy” (Creswell, 2012, p. 237). All respondent data was captured through careful examination and checked for validity and reliability.

Coding

The coding process was implemented by the researcher to sort data into categories for the purpose of identifying similarities and patterns from participant interviews. According to Maxwell (2005), “coding helps fracture the data and rearrange them into categories that facilitate comparison between things that are similar” (p. 96). The researcher followed Creswell’s (2012) coding process that includes “dividing data into image segments, labeling segments with codes, examining codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapsing codes into themes” (p. 243). This process enabled the researcher to make true sense of the data.

Themes

Connective strategies were utilized by the researcher to organize data into broad themes and collective issues (Maxwell, 2005). Using Creswell’s (2012) suggested practice for establishing themes, “codes will be aggregated together to form major ideas” (p. 248). Themes created from this process were then labeled and categorized by similarities and frequency. Analysis of themes found in each case was performed until all insight was uncovered and properly reported.

Research Rigor

Actions were taken throughout the study to ensure that the data collected and research results were reliable, trustworthy, valid, and ethical in nature. To ensure quality rigor exists, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) reveal “careful attention must be given to a study’s conceptualization and the way in which data are collected, analyzed, interpreted, and presented”

(p. 238). Several measures were taken so conclusions drawn from the study provided valid and concise insight for multiple audiences.

Credibility

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) expound that “credible research results should be consistent with previous findings in the literature, while explaining the relationship between research variables” (p. 294). Researcher credibility was established through evidence of an extensive literature review, as well as professional experiential background related to the research topic. Data gathered through interviewing and review of secondary documents was gathered, collected, and analyzed to maximize the quality of research inquiry. Field testing and member checks were also applied to secure the legitimacy of the study.

Dependability

“All research inquiries should be dependable, including the appropriateness of inquiry decisions and methodological shifts during the process” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 295). Data gathered in the individual case studies, including research notes, written transcripts, event records, records of correspondence, and secondary documents, were filed in safe and secure locations, with back-up storage copies in place to certify the protection of vital study information. This data was available for external review to strengthen research dependability. Creswell (2012) recommends that these external reviews should be executed according to auditing standards to strengthen dependability.

Confirmability

“Objectivity is defined as the minimization of inquirer and methodological bias in the quest for truth” (Greene, 2007, p. 165). Due to the fact this case study was conducted in a qualitative structure, there could be potential for personal bias during the process. For this

reason, validity checks were extremely important in the methods used for this case study. According to authors Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), “researchers must capture these interpretations accurately and without distortion” (p. 212). Several trustworthiness strategies were implemented during this process to ensure the qualitative results were valid and reliable. Prolonged engagement with subjects was applied throughout the study and the participant pool was selected from established professional means consisting of reliable individuals who exhibited similar backgrounds, professional experiences, and educational beliefs. Respondents were also asked to continually verify individual verbal answers during the interview process to solidify information accuracy, validity, and reliability.

Transferability

Research findings were transferable to multiple settings and other social contexts outlined within the scope of the study. Multiple cases were included in the study to broaden the depth of data gathered for analysis and conclusion purposes. The validation of these findings were found through strategic execution of triangulation methods. Triangulation techniques were applied through interview and observation methods for data collection and interpretation purposes to solidify research validity and accuracy. “If the results provide consistent or convergent information, then confidence in inquiry inferences is increased” (Greene, 2007, p. 100). Maxwell (2005) explains, “triangulation reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method” (p. 93). Additionally, member checks were conducted at the conclusion of the individual interviews with a trusted professional colleague to verify the credibility of researcher interpretation of participant responses. Overall, there was great confidence in the validity of qualitative data gathered in this case study.

Summary

This research study utilized a qualitative case study design for the core methodology. The purpose of this study was to explore, understand, and describe the perceptions of community college presidents in rural serving Oklahoma institutions as to their roles and involvement in fund raising. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight sitting community college presidents in rural serving Oklahoma colleges, followed by coding qualitative analysis and data organization into usable reference formats. Themes were developed from the analysis that were carefully scrutinized through evaluative measures to solidify the validity of reported data. Rigorous criteria assigned to the qualitative research design was followed to guarantee the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter IV

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data collected from this qualitative multiple case study are presented and analyzed in this chapter. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, understand, and describe the perceptions of community college presidents in rural serving Oklahoma institutions as to their roles and involvement in fundraising. All eight current rural serving community college presidents in Oklahoma agreed to participate in the study. Interviews were conducted over a two-week period in October 2017, although extensive data collection occurred over the entire month of October, 2017. Interviews were conducted in person and onsite at pre-determined locations suggested by the participants, most of which were executed on their host campus sites. The chapter also provides biographical, demographic, and professional profiles of each participant gathered through interviews, written materials, and field notes.

Description of Participant Cases

Eight rural community college presidents in the state of Oklahoma were identified for inclusion in this study. This group included three female presidents and five male presidents. Appropriate institutional categorization was confirmed by the researcher through consultation with the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, as well as the Oklahoma Association of Community Colleges at the time of the study. Each participant provided relevant information to the study voluntarily, and were all assigned pseudonyms (fictitious names indicated in Table 1 and Table 2) to protect personal identities. Numbers assigned to participant pseudonyms were based on interview order, not to be represented in level of importance.

Table 1 illustrates participant profile demographics including: number of professional years of experience in higher education, highest level of educational attainment, and chosen field of study in graduate work.

Table 1

Demographic Data Profile of Study Participants

Pseudonym	# Years of Experience in Higher Education	Highest Educational Attainment	Field of Study
P1	16+	Master's, Doctorate ABD	Community College Education
P2	16+	Master's	Education/ Business
P3	11-15	Ed.D.	Educational Leadership
P4	16+	Ph.D.	Agriculture
P5	16+	Master's	Journalism
P6	16+	Ed.D.	Higher Education Instruction
P7	16+	Ed.D.	Adult & Higher Education
P8	16+	Ed.D.	Higher Education Administration

Table 2 illustrates professional data profiles including: number of years in current presidential position, position held prior to the presidency, and percentage of time per week spent fundraising.

Table 2

Professional Data Profile of Study Participants

Pseudonym	# Years in Current Presidency	Prior Position	% of Time Per Week Spent Fundraising
P1	1-5	VP for Workforce & Economic Development	20-30
P2	6-10	VP of Finance & Administration	10-20

Table 2 (Continued)

Professional Data Profile of Study Participants

Pseudonym	# Years in Current Presidency	Prior Position	% of Time Per Week Spent Fundraising
P3	11-15	Dean of Branch Campus	0-10
P4	1-5	Sr. VP Academics & Student Affairs	20-30
P5	1-5	Executive VP	0-10
P6	6-10	Dean of a University Branch Campus	10-20
P7	6-10	VP of Enrollment/Director of Athletics	10-20
P8	6-10	VP Academics & Student Support	0-10

Rural Community College President One (P1)

Rural Community College President One (P1) began [his/her] career in higher education as a faculty member. Although P1 finished [his/her] master’s degree, as well as all coursework required for a doctoral degree in community college education, [he/she] abandoned the academic pursuit in the dissertation phase due to life circumstances that prevented completion. Later, P1 worked to become a grant writer and faculty member at [his/her] current employing institution. P1 left there for a brief time to take a vice-presidency of student services and student learning at a technical college in another state. From there, P1 left that position to run the student activities department for a private university for five years. P1 then accepted another out-of-state position as director of distance learning for a large community college. After a few years in that position, P1 moved back to Oklahoma to become the associate vice-provost of academic affairs at an urban community college. Following six years in that position, P1 accepted a position at [his/her] current college as the vice president for communications, marketing, and online learning. That

position grew to include community relations, workforce/economic development, and business partnerships. Several years later, the serving president resigned and P1 was asked to assume the role of president by the institutional governing board, which [he/she] currently serves.

My visit to P1's campus included an extensive interview period, followed by a personal tour from the president [himself/herself]. The personalized campus tour included several physical structures, faculty/staff interactions, and a few casual student conversations. I was impressed with P1's level of relation ability with various individuals on campus. Evidence of P1's grant-writing expertise was displayed throughout campus including: a Native American student success center, Veteran's center, multiple TRIO program areas, and various labs all funded by successful grant campaigns. P1 pointed out several renovations to existing building structures during our tour that were made possible from revenue generated from [his/her] reallocation of investment dollars, that led to higher yields and increased improvements to physical structures as well as student scholarships.

Rural Community College President Two (P2)

Rural Community College President Two (P2) began [his/her] academic career as a public school teacher in a large rural school district near Oklahoma City. P2 completed [his/her] master's degree in education/business during [his/her] stint as a public school teacher. In the mid-eighties, P2 became the program chair for the business management program at [his/her] current employing institution. P2 worked [his/her] way from a faculty member, to department chair, and eventually dean in the business division. Eventually, the college president approached P2 to become the chief financial officer; a position that [he/she] held for several years, which led to the presidency.

My visit to P2's campus began with a brief introductory meeting with the institutional executive staff members, followed by an interview period, and a personal tour from the president [himself/herself]. P2's passion and pride for building was very evident during our tour of campus. There were several new buildings placed throughout an amazing landscape, filled with multiple student gathering areas, activity centers, and robust signage. P2 guided me through greatly renovated historic structures, while [he/she] pointed out plans for new growth areas. The students, faculty, and staff members I encountered during my time there seemed to share great pride for the evolutionary transition of facilities P2 brought to the college. I had been to P2's campus several years ago, and it was remarkable to see the positive transformation under [his/her] guidance and leadership.

Rural Community College President Three (P3)

Rural Community College President Three (P3) spent the first 10 years of [his/her] career in public education working in a variety of jobs including teacher, coach, and administrator. P3 then worked for a few years in a large Career Tech system in the state of Oklahoma. During this time period, P3 obtained a doctoral degree in education from a large state research institution. This work taught P3 valuable skills that [he/she] would later rely on as a rural community college president related to public relations, financial aid, marketing, and economic development. The next professional transition occurred for P3 when [he/she] accepted a branch campus dean position for [his/her] current serving institution. After a successful tenure in that position, the college board of regents asked P3 to take over as president, a role that [he/she] currently fills.

My visit to P3's campus included an interview period, followed by a brief personal tour from the president [himself/herself]. P3 pointed out multiple examples of [his/her] fundraising

accomplishments during the tour of [his/her] beautiful campus. Dedicated plaques of distinguished alumni members/donors hung throughout the hallways of every building on campus. Tiered donors/boosters were honored in every athletic facility in various formats based upon giving levels. Even a new student center displayed the generous donor's name in large stylish letters on the front exterior of the building. P3 explained how important these symbols of honor were to [his/her] target donor market consisting of alumni, local business leaders, and friends of the foundation. Every placement appeared to be strategic in nature and was a great representation of P3's methodical approach to fundraising.

Rural Community College President Four (P4)

Rural Community College President Four (P4) began [his/her] career in higher education as a faculty member at [his/her] current institution, where [he/she] worked for several years while pursuing a doctoral degree in Agriculture. As time progressed, P4 worked [his/her] way through the ranks, eventually becoming vice-president of enrollment management, Later, P4 added student services to [his/her] vice-presidency, followed by a transition to become the vice-president for academic affairs, and then, senior vice-president for academic and student affairs. That position led to [his/her] current presidency.

P4 began our visit by allowing me to observe a small meeting of upper-level administrators discussing future marketing strategies to increase student interest, enrollment, and fundraising. We conducted the interview after the meeting concluded, followed by a brief personal tour from the president [himself/herself. P4 took me to some incredible facilities at various locations across campus that were newly constructed, freshly renovated, and in early-construction phase. Some of these sites included: A Native American Center, student computer/study lounge, athletic field house, and a college history center. P4 described his

strategy of “combination fundraising execution” to construct these impressive facilities.

[He/she] matches obtained grant funds with private donations and corporate gifts to increase building power for capital improvement projects across campus. This has enabled P4 to provide maximum building power for project completion, which was masterfully displayed in the elaborate facilities on showcase during our tour. It was obvious that P4’s relationship building talents and grant writing experience have benefitted [his/her] institution significantly in terms of capital improvements.

Rural Community College President Five (P5)

Rural Community College President Five (P5) began [his/her] career at [his/her] employing college 30 years ago as an adjunct English instructor. P5 was named as the public information officer in a full-time position a few years after that and worked in various areas of the institution including: public relations, assistant to the president, and for the past 20 years, in some role as a vice-president, associate vice president, and ultimately executive vice-president. Therefore, it was a natural transition to the presidency for P5 when the outgoing president recommended [him/her] for the position to the board of regents. P5 has served as president less than a year.

P5 began our visit by introducing me to several key staff members in [his/her] administrative office suite, along with a detailed explanation of key job duties and institutional connection. I was thoroughly impressed with P5’s working knowledge of each one of these individuals, as well as [his/her] job specifics. After these brief visits, we conducted our interview composed of formal questions from the Interview Guide (Appendix D) and follow-up probes.

Although I had visited P5's campus on several occasions, [he/she] pointed out some new project improvements and encouraged me to take a self-guided tour to see the additions. I accepted the offer and explored the suggested areas of improvement including: a new scenic park area; several beautification pieces ranging from statues to modern paintings; and a sprawling sports complex located near campus. All of these structures, from buildings to park benches, included donor recognition pieces and demographic information. This campus was the most comprehensive of all of my visits in terms of donor recognition through visual displays. It was evident that P5 had a firm grasp and understanding on the importance of proper donor recognition stemming from [his/her] rich history in development work for the institution.

Rural Community College President Six (P6)

Rural Community College President Six started as an adjunct instructor at a state university, and eventually took a full professorship. A couple of years later, P6 became the division chair while [he/she] was working on a doctoral degree in higher education instruction. During this time period, P6 was asked to become the institutional self-study coordinator for the higher learning commission visit. Later, P6 became a branch campus administrator for a regional university and served in that role for seven years until [he/she] applied for a rural community college presidency. P6 has served in that capacity for a few years now, and has assumed various leadership roles related to higher education at the state, regional, and national levels.

Due to the long distance travelled, I arrived at P6's campus on the afternoon before our scheduled visit. I took this opportunity to conduct a self-guided tour of the campus. This site was one of the oldest sites in the state, complete with pronounced traditionally designed buildings, pristine/manicured grounds, modern cultural accent pieces (statues, sculptures, decorative art), and descriptive building markers/maps. Other campus facilities including

recreation fields and athletic facilities were located further away from the academic center of campus. It was refreshing to see several students wandering about the campus grounds during the time of my tour, which was the later afternoon. The residence halls are integral to the maintenance and growth of the traditional student population of this college, due to the isolated geographic location.

Early the next morning I met P6 and we conducted the interview. After the interview concluded, P6 took me to a resource area within [his/her] office that contained robust informational sources for the college including: fact books, program pamphlets, statistical data sheets, and recruitment materials. P6 explained how [he/she] used these resources in various ways to solicit funds through grant-writing, foundational work, and business partnerships. This unique approach grew from P6's background in strategic plan development, analytics, accreditation writing/reporting, and research.

Rural Community College President Seven (P7)

Rural Community College President Seven (P7) was proud to proclaim [he/she] was a community college student who later transferred to a research university to finish a baccalaureate degree. Upon graduation, P7 was a junior high teacher/coach in a public school system in central Oklahoma. After about seven years of that, P7 decided to make the move to higher education. [He/she] obtained a master's degree in higher education counseling, and accepted a student services position at a midwest university. P7 returned to Oklahoma a few years later and worked as an academic advisor/counselor for a major research university for a decade. Later, P7 became a vice-president for enrollment and a director of intercollegiate athletics at the NCAA level, followed by a professional move to Oklahoma City as part of the state agency in Oklahoma

known as the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. A few years later P7 became the president at [his/her] current rural serving college.

My visit to P7's campus included a self-guided tour, followed by an interview. P7's campus is one of the largest rural community colleges in the state of Oklahoma, so the campus grounds were substantially sizable compared to the other institutions I visited during the study. There were a considerable number of residential housing units on campus, due partly to the vast number of student athletic programs and fine arts emphasis. This institution had a complimentary variety of traditional and modern designs incorporated in classroom buildings, lab spaces, student activity areas, performing arts center, and athletic facilities. All areas of campus displayed student-centered informational sections, donor recognition pieces, and distinguished/honored alumni displays. P7 explained to me that multiple successful capital gains campaigns paid for a large portion of these impressive facilities, as well as student leadership development activities for the student body.

Rural Community College President Eight (P8)

Rural Community College President Eight (P8) has had an amazing career path to the presidency that includes a longstanding career in virtually all areas of higher education. P8 received [his/her] bachelor's degree in history, followed by a master's degree in history, and finally a doctoral degree in higher education administration. P8 began [his/her] career at a college in eastern Oklahoma, where [he/she] spent seven years as an administrator and adjunct instructor. P8's next move was to a regional university in Kansas, where [he/she] spent one year as director of minority programs for that institution, followed by a move to a research university in west Texas, where [he/she] served as assistant dean of students. P8 then took a job as dean of students for five years at a regional university in north central Texas. A few years later, P8 made

a move from that institution in north central Texas to a regional university in north central Oklahoma, where [he/she] was associate vice-president for student affairs. Next, P8 became a vice president at a community college in metro Oklahoma City, where [he/she] stayed five years, and then made a move to another research institution in Oklahoma, where [he/she] was associate vice president for student affairs. P8's next move was to the presidency at a rural community college within the state, the role [he/she] assumes presently.

Due to scheduling conflicts and time constraints, P8 and I agreed to conduct our interview at the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education Office located in Oklahoma City. Formal questions from the Interview Guide (Appendix D) and follow-up probes were discussed during the interview period. P8 has been an amazing mentor to several incoming presidents and administrators over the years, and has held many state, regional, and national appointments related to higher education leadership.

Research Questions

This study was established to address the following research questions:

1. How do community college presidents describe their professional roles in fundraising?
2. Which personal and professional characteristics do current rural community college presidents describe as necessary for effectiveness in fundraising?
3. How do current rural community college presidents describe prior fundraising experience as contributing to current and future fundraising success?
4. How do current rural community college presidents describe the impact of pressures for fundraising success on their overall presidential performance?
5. How do rural community college presidents describe their proudest fundraising accomplishments?

Each interview included 10 open-ended questions listed on the interview guide (Appendix D), followed by clarifying probes asked by the primary researcher to the participant. These questions were designed to relate back to the five research questions included in the study.

Data Analysis

The framework for this qualitative study was developed through the categorization of the five research questions which included: (a) professional roles in fundraising; (b) necessary personal and professional characteristics for effective fundraising; (c) perceptions relating prior fundraising experience to current and future success; (d) impact of fundraising pressures on presidential performance; and (e) proudest fundraising accomplishments. Participant data gained from interview transcripts, field notes, participant profile demographic questionnaires (Appendix C), and secondary sources were coded and analyzed according to Creswell's (2012) coding process that includes "dividing data into image segments, labeling segments with codes, examining codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapsing codes into themes" (p. 243). Themes were then developed to tie the main points of the case study together.

Coding Results

The following section of this chapter is organized by research question, themes, and participant responses pertaining to interview questions. Findings from this study were gathered through participant interviews (Appendix D), which consisted of 10 questions related to presidential fundraising in Oklahoma at the rural community college level. Efforts were made to the extent allowed by law and university policy to protect the anonymity of individual participants to ensure his/her identity would not be linked directly and/or indirectly to study findings. Transcripts contained bracketed information to replace specific responses that could be

referenced to specific individuals and/or institutions. Each research question section begins with a reference table.

Table 3

Themes from Research Question One

Research Question 1:	How do community college presidents describe their professional roles in fundraising?
Theme:	Relationship building
Theme:	Face of the institution
Theme:	Establish and communicate vision

Research Question 1: Professional Roles

The development of fundamental presidential roles associated with fundraising is crucial to the sustainability of rural community colleges. Three major themes emerged from the participant interviews describing professional roles in fundraising: relationship building; observance as the “face of the institution”; and establishing and communicating the vision.

Findings related to this research question are presented as follows:

Relationship building. The first theme raised during the participant interviews was the importance of relationship building roles in the fundraising process.

Rural Community College President One:

Relationship building in the communities is key. You’ve got to truly let community folks know it’s not just about having students in the classroom, it’s also about establishing the internships for our students with business and industry. We have worked hard to develop those relationships because my predecessor made it a point to make our institution an island surrounded by a community, and the bridges to both were being burned. My primary role is to make people understand that the middle part of our name is what we are: we are [a community college].

Rural Community College President Five:

People want to have a relationship with the president. They want to give to somebody who is trustworthy and has integrity, and that’s, for better or worse, reflected through the

president. So, I think there's a lot of responsibility there.

Rural Community College President Six:

Relationship building is a lot of it. People want to trust you, trust the institution, know that their gift is going to be used the right way. A lot of times it's the faculty or staff relationships too. The donor just wants you to be a part of the conversation. It's hard in our culture specifically, because I don't want my friends to think I'm just their friend because I know they have resources.

Rural Community College President Eight:

What I found in my institution, in my community – I have a marvelous director of development – when people give to the institution, basically, they're giving to the community. He's established a friend base of over 30 years of relationship that he has built within the community and with these different corporate business entities. So, that relationship includes a great deal of trust. So, without that dynamic, we would not be as successful in terms of our foundation funding as we are right now.

Face of the institution. Rural community college presidents are viewed as the “face of the institutions” they represent, serving in several key roles as the prominent representatives of their colleges, as well as their target service markets.

Rural Community College President Two:

You have to be the face of the organization. It certainly helps if you're likeable. You certainly have to have the ability to not take things personally. A good sense of humor helps, but you have to be a fighter. You have to be scrappy. In our communities, they look to us for leadership for a lot of things, not just our institution, but they look to us for everything. That is why I think that a good partnership between the college and the community is very, very important. They help support you in your fundraising efforts as well.

Rural Community College President Three:

I think it's no different than universities. We are the head cheerleaders. Public relations is our number one objective. We have to be visible. We have to be the face of the institution. You have to attend most of the events and functions that are happening in your respective area. [Our institution] serves a part of the state that covers almost three counties. You have to be visible in whatever else you do all over southeastern Oklahoma. I mean, I'm on a national board, so you try to grow and develop from that perspective, involving the state level in various ways. My philosophy also has been that you better be very astute on finances and stay engaged on the financial operations. I have a very good relationship with my vice-president for business affairs, and that's probably one of the

strengths that I brought to the position, was budgeting and financing. I had a pretty strong background in that area. You have to stay on top of things and you have to know where your money's at and where you're getting your money. Those are the two things that I look at from my position.

Rural Community College President Five:

I think the president is always the ultimate face of the institution and of the foundations for those colleges that have foundations.

Rural Community College President Seven:

In rural community college fundraising, the primary roles for a college president is to really be the primary leader for your region, and that includes things ranging from economic development to educational services. What that means is you have to be multitalented, multi-diverse, you have to really embrace the role and be the resident expert in lots of ways, and you know, a lot of people don't find that appealing because you want to be the most knowledgeable, the most experienced, anytime you're out doing things, but the reality is that today rural community college presidents have to wear a bunch of major hats and they have to get comfortable with being underprepared or not as prepared as you'd like to be because virtually every time you walk in the room in these regional kind of settings, you're going to be viewed as one of the key players, if not the most important player.

Establish and communicate vision. Rural community college presidents must establish and effectively communicate institutional vision in the fundraising process to ensure strategic goals are met, and donors are satisfied.

Rural Community College President Four:

You have to set the vision; that's the first role, and to make sure that you're able to articulate the positive things that are going on. I think that if you can articulate the vision and demonstrate how donor support will help you achieve your goals, which we all should be focusing on student success, then it seems easier to get people to buy in.

Rural Community College President Six:

Determining when the right time or the right project that matches is important because the donors have to have affinity with whatever it is you're doing.

Rural Community College President Eight:

Direction. The president, you know, must have a clear thought about the direction that he or she wants the development officer to pursue. I think another aspect of that, in

particularly in my sense – I had an experienced development officer. So, if I was tone deaf to that person, then I would not be doing that person any good. I would not be doing the institution any good. So, you have to be able to listen, and you have to be able to, once you listen, get a feel for what it is they’re trying to do and then direct them appropriately. And then, once you do that, kind of stay out of the way.

Table 4

Themes from Research Question Two

Research Question 2:	Which personal and professional characteristics do current rural community college presidents describe as necessary for effectiveness in fundraising?
Theme:	Genuineness
Theme:	Connection to people
Theme:	Communication

Research Question 2: Personal and Professional Characteristics

There are certain personal and professional characteristics that enable presidents to become more successful in fundraising efforts. Three major themes emerged from the participant interviews describing the necessary personal and professional characteristics for effectiveness in fundraising: genuineness; personal connection; and communication. Findings related to this research question are presented as follows:

Genuineness. Rural community college presidents must be seen as genuine and sincere in the eyes of donors and the constituencies they serve.

Rural Community College President One:

Genuineness. You don’t go out and sell people a story. You have to tell people how their assistance will make a difference in human beings’ lives. Most people for the large part want to do good. They don’t know how they can do good, and your role as a fundraiser is to go out there and tell them that their contributions, even though they may not think are large contributions, are the aggregate of what they’re giving us money for – because some folks don’t want to establish their own scholarships, but they’ll give to our general scholarship fund. You have got to show people how their contributions make a difference in real people’s lives.

Rural Community College President Five:

I would mention integrity and honesty at the top of my list.

Rural Community College President Six:

Sincerity and trustworthiness. We get asked to write checks all of the time and we do, but I want there to be a real need, something that we've tried to fill on our own, but is not possible for us to get to the level of what I think the students need, for me to go ask somebody for money. I really have to think about the students – because that's not my natural thing. I would rather give to people.

Rural Community College President Seven:

I think you have to genuinely believe in what you're doing when you're trying to talk people out of their money or out of their estates or talk your way into their estate planning. I think successful people with money have good instincts. They've been successful all their lives. They can sniff out somebody who's not genuine.

Personal connection. Presidents, especially in geographically isolated areas, must hold the ability to relate to people, as well as the competency to build meaningful relationships with various individuals and groups in order to maximize fundraising opportunities and gifts.

Rural Community College President Two:

The ability to connect, and passion for your mission and what you do. You have to believe in your programs and your institution; what you're selling; and most importantly, your product. You have to be generous. You need the skillset to navigate the political climate successfully. And some do that much better than others.

Rural Community College President Three:

It's that relationship building that matters most. You have to be able to build relationships with people.

Rural Community College President Four:

I think your ability to relate with people– people skills.

Rural Community College President Five:

Charisma would be good. In my case, I feel like what I might lack in charisma, I've built through relationships over many years of proven service to the community and proven love to [the college], and that I'm always here and try to do what's right.

Rural Community College President Eight:

Patience, realizing that a seed must be planted. A door must be knocked on. An approach must be pursued. And then, having the patience to just kind of watch it take effect, watch it grow, watch that seed grow. And to a degree, some persistence because people are busy, and if you visit them in March, and you haven't heard from them by May, you know you need to call back. Visit them again. You know, either phone call or personal visit to see how that seed is germinating or remind them about your discussions previously, and again, that has happened. Once you make that kind of visit, it's not that they've forgotten, it's just they've got a lot of irons in the fire also, and they will let you know that they are. If I made a commitment to you, I'm going to honor that commitment.

Communication. The ability to communicate effectively in a variety of aspects and means is essential to presidential fundraising efforts.

Rural Community College President Three:

Natural ability in public relations helps tremendously. You have to be able to talk to people. What's funny about that is it really depends on individual personality. You have to build relationships with people if you want to raise funds for your college. And so, I think that is the key.

Rural Community College President Four:

You must have the ability to tell the story. You know, it's critical.

Rural Community College President Five:

Other characteristics like being a good speaker, a good writer, and communicator are all critical in any fundraising role.

Rural Community College President Seven:

They can also sniff out people who don't have a plan. So, when you go to asking people for small amounts, large amounts, doesn't really matter, you need to be able to clearly articulate why that is important, why their gift is important, what you plan to do with that gift, and the outcomes that you hope to produce from their generosity.

Table 5

Themes from Research Question Three

Research Question 3	How do current rural community college presidents describe and perceive prior fundraising experience as contributing to current and future fundraising success?
Sub-Question	In terms of fundraising responsibilities, how prepared were you when you entered the presidency?
Theme:	Not prepared
Theme:	Moderately prepared
Theme:	Well prepared
Sub-Question	How have your past fundraising experiences impacted the fundraising efforts at your current institution?
Theme:	Relationships
Theme:	Investments
Theme:	External funding
Theme:	Learning from failure

Research Question 3: Prior Fundraising Experience Contributing to Future Success

Fundraising preparedness gained from prior experience guides current and future fundraising activities at the presidential level. There were a number of themes that emerged from the participant interviews describing how prior fundraising experience contributed to current and future fundraising success. Two sub-questions were utilized in data gathering for this research question. Findings from the sub-question defining how prepared participants were for fundraising when they entered their current presidential roles presented three emerging themes: not prepared; moderately prepared; and well prepared. Findings from this sub-question are presented as follows:

Not prepared. These participants entered their presidential roles with little or no fundraising experience.

Rural Community College President One:

Not at all, to be quite honest. I hadn't done fundraising. I had experience relationship building with business and industry. In a roundabout way, that was fundraising because a lot of those business industries supplied equipment or would provide expertise. I was doing some fundraising for the programs I led, but now it's a totally different boat. Now, as state funding decreases, the only way we will remain able to maintain a level of integrity and affordability is to raise funds from external sources. I've got to do more one-on-one fundraising. So, it's changed drastically in that sense.

Rural Community College President Four:

Not prepared enough. In fact, I'm still learning. I helped with a few alumni events and became involved in some other campaigns throughout the years, but I don't know that I categorize any of them as being very successful in terms of fund generation.

Rural Community College President Eight:

Zero, to be honest. You know, I had certainly in those other various positions worked with fundraisers, some development offices and officers, and you saw some of what they were doing, but you did not have the level of knowledge that a president needs to know about these institutions, about those particular offices. So, I came into that position knowing very, very little about the role of development in terms of enhancing the institution and its outreach efforts.

Moderately Prepared. These participants entered their presidential roles with moderate fundraising experience.

Rural Community College President Three:

Actually, I was not ill prepared. When you work in education, you're always raising money; not to the level that I've tried to do as a college president, but the simple part of raising money is developing relationships, just like anything else. I mean, you have to develop relationships with people. I couldn't come in as president knowing the institution was struggling financially and needing money and needing endowed scholarships for the foundation, etc. without building relationships with people. Sometimes you win and sometimes you lose on fundraising, and sometimes you lose even when you have good relationships.

Rural Community College President Five:

Since I've been in community relations and legislative relations, I was pretty aware of the need and strategies for fundraising. I was not the front person, so I didn't have to do as much as I believe this role will require that I do now. But, I know that it's paramount to the role of a president, and there's no getting around that, and I think it all ties hand-in-

hand to the relationship with legislators, the relationship with your chambers and community, and all of that. So, I see it as an outgrowth of public relations.

Rural Community College President Six:

I've served on a lot of nonprofit boards. So, the majority of my experience wasn't from formal training. I had attended some professional development things, when I was at [the university], a CASE conference and some of that sort of stuff, but most of my experience was from volunteering before I took the role.

Well prepared. These participants entered their presidential roles with adequate to excellent fundraising experience.

Rural Community College President Two:

I was probably better prepared than most. Higher education finance is very complex, you know. The state makes it even more difficult. I believe that many times when a new president comes in, they have to depend so much on their chief financial officer that, sometimes, making decisions takes a long time and actions seem to be delayed. So, I think that certainly helped me because I knew how the system worked. I knew where the money was. I knew how to go after other money. And, I think that it certainly helped with the learning curve, as far as the president's role is concerned. When you have the money part figured out, it's a lot less pressure on the rest of it. I was pretty prepared in that regard.

Rural Community College President Seven:

I'd say moderately to probably pretty prepared. I did that at [the research university]. So, I was the chief development officer for the division of student affairs. Big operation, three hundred employees, multi-million dollar budgets. I got a good taste of fundraising there. I reinstated things like the class gift project for the university and the single class ring project to raise money. And, being around a successful research university fundraising president for seven years opened my eyes to what a fundraiser could be on a college campus. So, I'd say prepared.

When posed with the interview sub-question describing how rural community college presidents perceive prior fundraising experience as contributing to current and future fundraising success related to professional roles in fundraising, the following themes emerged: relationships; investments; external funding; and learning from failure. Regarding these themes, the following answers were provided:

Relationships. The development and cultivation of strong relationships provide a solid foundation for current and future fundraising pursuits.

Rural Community College President One:

Those experiences in relationship building have helped me get to where I am today.

Rural Community College President Three:

From the past fundraising perspective, I think it's been positive. I've always been successful in that regard. I guess that originates from my time in the public school system where our big goal was to raise money, and I was always effective in going out and doing my part to raise funds. I didn't raise a lot of money in those days, but for the cause, I raised money. There have been so many different efforts in fundraising I've been a part of over the years whether they're small or large, and once again, it goes back to building relationships. The challenge with two-year colleges is that most students who wind up in universities tend to give their money to those universities. They give their money to the university if they are givers at all. Giving, to me is like anything else; you either have it in your heart and soul, or you don't. I've known people that have been millionaires but they don't know how to give. They don't understand the concept of giving, and then I've known people who have the same type of resources and they give all they can. So, it still depends on the person. So, the role as a community college president is building those relationships and trying to find what interests these potential givers; what's their interests; what do they want to; what would they like to see their money given to. And then, you must compete with other foundations and organizations for the money. I mean, I'm currently working on some of that stuff right now, and looking, hopefully, for some sizable gifts. You must build relationships, identify the donor's cause, and determine what they want to give to. And then, you try to frame up your pitch in that regard; see if you can work something out that satisfies everyone.

Rural Community College President Five:

Developing relationships has probably been the most critically important part of my role at [the college].

Investments. Innovative investment strategies have provided strong fundraising outcomes for those rural community college presidents willing to test their market options.

Rural Community College President One:

My experience has taught me to explore all of my investment options. And, I'm trying to convince my colleagues to stop thinking in traditional ways. Move your money somewhere else because now every penny we earn will help us continue our mission.

Rural Community College President Seven:

A decade ago we had a foundation that had a net value of assets at about six-hundred-thousand. This past year, we topped 6 million in our net assets. In fact, I just looked yesterday. In the nine plus years, just in our market investments alone, we've generated 1.7 million dollars, just in market investments. That struck me as we've earned three times more money by letting our money earn money than what we actually had in holdings, you know, nine years ago. What I learned through this process is what we do in the world of fundraising is hugely important to the long term stability of our rural community colleges, and it's hard work and there's not enough hands on deck, and a lot of times, you're going to hit a dry hole versus striking gold. All those things that you learn by engaging in this activity over time, I think benefits whatever institution you're serving.

External Funding. Budgetary constraints have forced rural community college presidents to explore different funding options for supplementary revenue income for their respective institutions. A variety of fundraising strategies in external resource development has led to increased funds for many two-year colleges in Oklahoma.

Rural Community College President One:

It has helped a great deal. Having always been in the community college system, you know, we've never been the most financially flush institutions in higher education. In terms of state allocations, we have been treated like step children. So, going out and writing grants and getting business and industry to help make commitments to give equipment or things like this has been necessary for survival. Those experiences in relationship building have helped me get to where I am today.

Rural Community College President Two:

I know that it has helped because we've raised more money in the last few years than we've ever raised. It certainly was necessary. We've gone after a lot of federal money that we never really took advantage of, but we have the good fortune of a large, large number of private foundations in our area that support us, especially our health programs. Also, the [service community] has hundreds of foundations that believe in what we do and support us. Of course, the tribes do as well. [This college] was founded as a school for tribal students, so we have great support from the tribes. I think that it has helped that I had relationships with some of these entities previously. Of course, I'm from this area, so I'm aware of the population who was born and raised over here, grew up here, and who the benefactors of the community are.

Rural Community College President Five:

In my previous roles, I've worked for the last 10 to 15 years directly with our foundation as the liaison, so I've handled much of the nuts-and-bolts of fundraising activities, golf tournaments, banquets, holiday events, and any kind of public activities. I've also been the liaison with the community; the person that sent all the news clippings and thank you letters to people while building relationships. So, much of the stuff that I drafted for the president has prepared me for now.

Rural Community College President Six:

I'm not ashamed to say that I copied good ideas. When I was at [the university], they had a presidential partners program. I wanted unrestricted funds that I could enhance the experience for students who were employees. That brings about \$60,000 a year. So, if students are going to a national tournament, or they're presenting on something, or they want to have a speaker like we have had in our cultural engagement center, we have funds through the presidential partners program.

Rural Community College President Eight:

Just really, really in a positive way, and if I could put some numbers to it, I would say in the last four years, last three and a half years, our fundraising efforts have increased annually in order of 5 to 10%. And, you know, that's a credit to our, certainly, our development officer. It's a credit to strategizing, being the most effective we can be. So, that's all been positive, and without my listening to him and trusting his judgment and trusting his way of action, then we would not be that successful. Particularly as a novice in this thing, you know, you just have to trust your people that they know what they're doing and give them the guidance and encouragement that they need, and then that will bear some fruit for you.

Learning from failure. Knowledge gained from self-reflective assessment related to failed fundraising efforts can provide a great wealth of information for future endeavors.

Rural Community College President Four:

I think they have helped me see what didn't work. You learn from your failures. You see what happened in the campaign, and whether it was lack of follow-through, not setting the stage, not getting the vision articulated, or gathering too little support. I think that's the thing; being able to see what we could have done better or should have done better.

Table 6

Themes from Research Question Four

Research Question 4	How do current rural community college presidents describe the impact of pressures for fundraising success on their overall presidential performance?
Sub-Question	How has the community college presidency changed during your tenure?
Theme:	Resources
Theme:	Competition
Sub-Question	What are your greatest challenges as a rural community college president in Oklahoma?
Theme:	Decreasing population
Theme:	Funding
Theme:	Maintaining quality faculty and staff members
Theme:	Morale

Research Question 4: Impact of Fundraising Pressure on Overall Performance

Multiple pressures surrounding the modern rural community college environment place great performance challenges on those serving presidents. Several themes emerged from the participant interviews describing how the pressures for fundraising success impacted overall presidential performance. Four sub-questions were employed to gather data for this research question. Findings from the sub-question defining how the community college presidency has changed during each participant’s tenure presented two emerging themes: resources and competition. Findings from this sub-question are presented as follows:

Resources. A lack of resources in Oklahoma due to state budget shortfalls has placed a tremendous operational burden on rural community college presidents.

Rural Community College President One:

Oh, incredibly. When I first got into the system, there were tons of federal dollars out there. I mean, we were writing grants left and right. I remember at the first college I worked for out of college, where I was a grant writer and a faculty member, I wrote three

grants in a two-year period that brought in over 7 million dollars to the institution. Now, there is substantially less money in that pie, and the problem is now there are more people that realize that's where the money is so there are more people going after it, so it's much harder to get.

Rural Community College President Two:

Money has always been a problem for community colleges, especially the rural community colleges, and I think that this is the worst I've seen it in my tenure. In the eighties we had a dip in funding. That was before I moved into the chief financial officer's role. And then, in the nineties, another really bad dip occurred, but those did not compare at all to what we're going through now. So, there have been several big changes: what's happened with the evolution of technology; changes in the makeup of leadership at our institutions; and then of course, finances.

Rural Community College President Three:

The challenge is resources in the state of Oklahoma. It's just lack of state support. The thing that I really hate is the fact that we are public institutions, but the state of Oklahoma is turning us into private institutions because of lack of funding. My philosophy has been forced to center on how can I generate more dollars for this cause and do good things. I developed my focus areas on the two things you can do to raise money: traditional fundraising and grants.

Rural Community College President Four:

More emphasis on fundraising, without a doubt. Obviously, less support from the state has triggered that change. Just for example, this year, I've got to go back to 1998 to find lower state appropriations than we received this year. And so, we have increased tuition to help fill the hole. The problem is that you can't raise it high enough to cover all that was cut. In 1990, when I started as a faculty member here and we would go out and recruit students, the total cost for tuition, fees, room and board, (everything except books) was about \$1,000 a semester, and now, we're bumping \$6,000 a semester.

Rural Community College President Five:

Well, my exact tenure has been pretty short, but over the last few years, what I've observed being close to the presidency is the tremendous hole in state funding and the need to rely on other resources.

Rural Community College President Six:

I would say, since I've become president, we've had a change in budgeting at the legislature. We've received large cuts the last three years. We've lost 2.4 million dollars out of our operating budget. This year, we had to cut our payroll \$675,000. So, we're really understaffed because we protected all of our full-time positions. We don't have part-time people helping with the workload, but the workload's the same. We did away

with the majority of our student worker positions except those that are federal work study. And so, some of those tough kinds of decisions have not been fun.

Rural Community College President Seven:

Well, obviously, being in Oklahoma, the level of state support literally started declining the year I became president. I've lived the last decade dealing with more financial uncertainty than at any point in the history of higher education in Oklahoma, being very unstable, really not knowing from day to day, much less the budget cycle. The budget cycle determines what our finances are going to be. So, I think that's probably been the most dominant thing that has taken place in my 10 years as a community college president.

Rural Community College President Eight:

I think the role has expanded more. Expanded in this sense. Every two years you just get a whole cadre of students, new students coming to your institution. Their needs change. Their focus changes. Just that whole dynamic about that student cohort is new every two years, and so, in order to address those particular needs, those changing and evolving needs, you know, you have to be aware of all the dynamics that are – that you need to address those students' changing needs, you know, financial aid changes, admission policy changes, recruitment strategies change. So, the needs change, which means that you have to constantly be thinking about this cohort of students, you know, three or five years down the line and what will their needs be and how can this institution address those needs.

Competition. Multiple factors related to funding and enrollment trends have led to a heightened competition among colleges and universities in the state of Oklahoma.

Rural Community College President One:

And the other thing is that you would think now there'd be a better understanding between regional and comprehensive universities and the community colleges. And from being as close-knit as we were, because the pie is smaller, everybody's scrambling more for the students, and the relationships that at one time were very strong and very articulated are no longer there, because now they feel threatened. So, there's become almost another divide between us, and instead of progressing over the last 25 years, I've seen us regressing. We are now fighting for the same students, which is ironic because the community college is an open-door system. The philosophy of a two-year college is different from the philosophy of a university or a graduate comprehensive university because those institutions don't want anybody walking through their doors. They don't want those students who scored a 12 on the ACT. They don't want those who have never taken an ACT. We've got a huge gap of the haves and have-nots in this state, and community college is the only bridge for most of those people to ever have an opportunity to move forward.

When posed with the interview question related to the greatest challenges facing rural community college presidents, four themes emerged including: decreasing population; funding; maintaining quality faculty and staff members; and morale. Regarding this sub-question, these answers were provided:

Decreasing Population. Decreasing service populations are presenting intensified problems for colleges and universities, particularly in rural geographic areas of the country.

Rural Community College President One:

Declining community throughout our service area. The population is decreasing in rural America. As much people want to stay on the family farms or stay in the small towns and run the family businesses, they're dying on the vine, and therefore, they're becoming urbanized rural America and they're not coming back to the small town. And that's our biggest challenge because the urban institutions are in a constant mode of growth and we're not, and so that becomes a real struggle for us. We are still doing the targeted marketing; we're huge in concurrent enrollment, so we're out in those small communities, trying to give them an educational opportunity at a higher education level. But the problem is we're doing such a good job of teaching concurrent courses that those kids are graduating high school with 24 college credit hours of A's and B's, and they believe they are ready to go to the university. They think that they don't need to go to community college now, and that's difficult. That's one of our greatest challenges is those decreasing towns, and we prepare them so well that they go off, and in my mind we're being successful because that's our job, but yet, from a funding source and a formula source of the state regents, we're not successful because we didn't graduate them. So, that's our biggest challenge.

Rural Community College President Seven:

I think there are many, and I think they change from year to year, but if I was just to create a list, I think enrollment's a big challenge in rural community colleges, not only in Oklahoma but around the nation, so I think it will continue to be a big challenge.

Funding. The lack of funding due to state budget cuts has provided a great number of challenges to Oklahoma rural community colleges.

Rural Community College President Two:

Well, of course, money is a challenge. I also would say that being in a rural area, the students that are coming to us underprepared, which is a huge challenge. Of course, it costs us money, first of all, and we spend time remediating those students, in which they

lose eligibility for other funding later because of it. I believe that community colleges have a challenge because many times we're perceived as less than the universities. We're the second choice, whereas I would prefer to be the first choice. Those would be my top challenges.

Rural Community College President Three:

I've studied and looked at this and thought about this for a long time, but in the state of Oklahoma it still goes back to funding. We have been cut around 30% in the state, and actually it's been more than that as we've had mid-year cuts. In terms of how you look at revenue loss for any college/university, it's about your enrollment numbers, and at my college, our enrollment in our nontraditional student population is down over 8,000 credit hours, so that's another 1.1 or 1.2 million. We're probably over four million less in funds than I was five years ago because of the state and lesser numbers. Still, the biggest challenge is money. If you had the resources to just do things, you could be very creative, but it's just mainly been funding.

Rural Community College President Four:

Funding, and as a consequence, being able to attract and retain the qualified faculty in all disciplines. It hampers you, not only just with faculty, but also, as we look around at the larger metro institutions, our peer institutions, and surrounding states, the other place that we lag behind is on the academic support side of things. We offer fewer tutoring opportunities and less academic help. We have fewer people to focus on student success other than faculty members, and it requires lots of folks to make that happen.

Rural Community College President Five:

It has to be funding. I mean, there are always personnel issues, there are always student issues, but there's so much that funding could solve and so many things that are exaggerated because funding is not there. Now, people have to work and do more than they signed on to do, and what they were trained to do, because there are fewer people doing it.

Rural Community College President Six:

Resources, lack of resources. We do have a foundation at [our college], but the traditional thought of fundraising has always been around scholarships for students. So, there is kind of a shift now and we're looking at operational resources to help programs.

Rural Community College President Seven:

I think there are many, and I think they change from year to year, but if I was just to create a list, I think enrollment's a big challenge in rural community colleges, not only in Oklahoma but around the nation, so I think it will continue to be a big challenge. I think keeping costs affordable is another big challenge for rural community college presidents.

Raising the resources needed. When you have state defunding public higher education, you have to find the resources somewhere. So, whether that's federal grant programs or private dollars or local donations from the community, I think is another business of resource development as a general rule.

Rural Community College President Eight:

There are a couple of them. From the operational standpoint, it's fiscal funding, funding from the legislative appropriations. We've been on a downward spiral for a number of years, and that has really kind of chipped away at our efforts to be, I think, as effective, in terms of our outreach, as we need to be, and also in terms of insuring that the quality that we all want in the instructional level is what it should be. So, funding that really addresses a lot of different areas of the college is a concern. And in a rural area, also, development fundraising is a challenge. Unless you have a major, national entity, corporation, located in your whole city that likes to be benevolent and likes to support higher education, then it's incumbent upon the president and the development officer to make the rounds to the various businesses that are home-based and solicit some funds to support the mission of the institution. So, from an operational standpoint, the legislative appropriations are a challenge, and from a development standpoint, it's just where you are that's a challenge. You deal with mom and pop shops and businesses, and that's certainly good. They're a stable of an economy, but sometimes they struggle to make their profits, also, and then you deal with farmers who really, in the ag business, who really watches their bottom line. And their productivity can be seasonal and really out of their control in terms of what impact Mother Nature can have on a crop. So, they're limited in what they can do from year to year. Those are incumbent challenges for rural institutions like ours.

Maintaining quality faculty and staff members. An unfortunate product of the funding shortage in Oklahoma higher education has been the difficult task of recruiting and retaining quality faculty and staff members in community college systems.

Rural Community College President Two:

We have a difficult time recruiting qualified staff and faculty and retaining them.

Rural Community College President Four:

Funding, and as a consequence, being able to attract and retain the qualified faculty in all disciplines. It hampers you, not only just with faculty, but also, as we look around at the larger metro institutions, our peer institutions, and surrounding states, the other place that we lag behind is on the academic support side of things. We offer fewer tutoring opportunities and less academic help. We have fewer people to focus on student success other than faculty members, and it requires lots of folks to make that happen.

Rural Community College President Six:

We have to grow our own leaders because our salaries aren't attractive enough to bring people with experience.

Morale. Maintaining positive morale across all facets of the institutional systems in Oklahoma community colleges has been difficult in the turbulent political and decimated economic environment across the state.

Rural Community College President Five:

Morale has suffered greatly due to the lack of funding.

Rural Community College President Seven:

The last five years in Oklahoma, I think, as a college president, learning how to be a cheerleader every day for your students, faculty, and staff to help keep morale up. Morale has been the single biggest challenge despite money shortfalls and funding reductions and crazy behavior out of the legislature. Every day, keeping our people focused on our mission, our purpose; making them still have some appreciation for the job that they have and the opportunity that they were given to educate the next generation of people, you know? I spend every day trying to be a motivator, a cheerleader, for our people.

Table 7

Other Themes from Research Question Four

Research Question 4	How do current rural community college presidents describe the impact of pressures for fundraising success on their overall presidential performance?
Sub-Question	How have the multiple pressures of fundraising affected presidential performance?
Theme:	Stress
Theme:	Balance
Theme:	Negative perception
Sub-Question	What is the single most pressing issue facing future rural community college presidents in Oklahoma?
Theme:	Funding
Theme:	Better public relations
Theme:	Changing landscape

When posed with the interview question related to the multiple fundraising pressures affecting presidential performance, three themes emerged including: stress; balance; and negative perception. The following answers for this sub-question were provided:

Stress. The mounting pressures associated with presidency at the rural community college level in Oklahoma have caused stress for many individuals serving in those roles.

Rural Community College President One:

Until you sit in the chair, you don't realize that your job is 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. And you are responsible not just for the physical but also the emotional, the intellectual, and the financial components. There is not anything that you don't touch on a daily basis. You must understand going into these jobs that it's an all-consuming job. You become the face of the community. And it doesn't matter where you are. We have to believe in everything we do as presidents. You know, Nelson Mandela, one of my favorite leaders in the world, said that education is the most powerful weapon in which to change the world; paraphrased, but it is true. At my last board evaluation, they told me that what they wanted to see now was for me to shift the majority of my time toward fundraising. I then tried to explain that the day-to-day operations of the college still have to happen. I'm currently serving as the president, CEO, and CAO right now, and I have been for almost two years. You know, you can do any other job in higher education and you have your professional persona and then you have your personal persona. You're never off duty as a president. Never.

Rural Community College President Five:

It's still very different, and as my colleagues have often told me, it's different when the buck stops here, and it's different when you've been in a position where you're pretty well liked, and were the person that was smoothing things over. One of my colleagues told me early on to get over that, that you're going to go home with people not liking you sometimes. So, I think that's probably been a little bit of an adjustment.

Rural Community College President Six:

I actually switched my emphasis. I was really frustrated last May and June after the budgeting process, with all the hours I am spending at the state capitol and with no result, but we're asked to come down, we're asked to be there, and I know that's a part of my role, but percentage-wise, with my time, it's not productive. I mean, I'm not getting results that I need for my campus.

Balance. Many rural community college presidents struggle to balance increased fundraising obligations with the daily operational responsibilities and job demands of their

current presidencies. Modifications to scheduling, planning, and time management must occur to maintain leadership functionality and competent job performance.

Rural Community College President Three:

The problem with fundraising from a two-year college standpoint is that you're so hands-on with a two-year college. University presidents, especially at our universities, get to just focus on fundraising. You have people that are totally over academic affairs, totally over operations, totally over finance, but you don't get involved in the weeds, so to speak, in the day-to-day operations. As a community college president, you're so hands-on. I mean, if an issue arises, you're right in the middle of it. You have to spend your time on it, messing with this and that. Right now, I literally have a list, a lengthy list, of probably 30 donors, potential donors, that I can predict probably 75% of them will give me something. But the problem is, I just need the time. It's hard to dedicate yourself to that and find the time. You're going to meetings, or you're going to functions, or something pops up where you have to deal with it on campus. It's just a time consuming effort in which you don't have enough time. It's just harder to be a community college president I think, because of the demands on your time, which are higher than a university president.

Rural Community College President Four:

I think that, while it's necessary, it takes away from the focus on student success, and that's what we should be here for, to help students realize their potential. Instead of making sure that we're trying to keep everybody focused on that, we're off somewhere at a fundraising event. My role has definitely changed.

Rural Community College President Five:

I'm in the early stages of this presidency, but we have a major capital effort to build a facility right now going on. And so, it is a driving force of the things that are said and done. I think it's affected my work. I've tried to be cognizant of that on campus, letting people know that this college is going to move forward despite funding issues, and because of that, we have to be very dependent on our corporate friends and our alumni and community supporters. So, balancing that act, knowing I have a campus to take care of, academic needs, faculty to take care of, yet we're out raising funds for something that is not directly tied to that function. It's very difficult. I've been here so long that I know the people, I know the community, I know the campus, and the entire institution.

Rural Community College President Six:

This summer I decided that I was going to be really intentional about scheduling out time with donors. But I actually shifted because we do employee surveys every year. I was reading through the surveys, and we try to make decisions based on their input. My first year, I went out and I had a lot of focus group things and listened to people. We then did

our strategic plan. Well, we're ending our strategic plan this year. It's a five-year plan, and next year we're going to be starting the process of another one. It felt like I needed to invest a large portion of my time listening to my employees. So, I had my assistant take my organizational chart and divide it out into small groups, and I've scheduled one-hour appointments with everyone. I've probably done about 45-48, something like that, but I will see everyone by the time it's done, and I've got a list of eight questions I'm just asking everybody. And part of it's to see how we can we save money, identify any waste, and things that have to do with our mission, but it's been really helpful for me. I'm seeing some changing trends and some energy savings. I've noticed some trends, reinforcing some things I thought I knew, but some things that weren't on my radar. It's been helpful for me to have that face-to-face time because we have zero white space in our calendars. The only way this is going to happen is if I'm intentional. I'm doing that this fall. I will have visited with everybody before Christmas Break, and then in the spring, I'm going to switch to donors and student groups.

Rural Community College President Seven:

It's certainly a stressful component of being a college president. I think for me, the way I kind of manage all of that, is, in some ways, all of the activities that I engage in, I give VIP treatment to. So, whether that's student activities that we're trying to enhance or grow or make better, whether it's faculty association issues, or trying to secure the largest gift in the history of the college, I try to make sure all of my audiences have complete devotion of my time and energies. And I try to make sure that fundraising, albeit demanding, difficult, really exhausting in many ways, is no more important than helping student government have a good event during homecoming week.

Negative perception. Presidents must maintain a sense of social awareness and proper etiquette in the handling of fundraising matters to avoid conflict and contention with current and potential donors within the constituencies they represent.

Rural Community College President Two:

You always have to be on your game for sure. You don't want to be perceived as the person who wants something every time you walk in the door, so we give as well. We have an entire volunteer program that allows staff time off during the Thanksgiving break and spring break, and what we're wanting is for our people to be out there volunteering and helping our community, so that we're recognized as a college that gives to them as well. So, if you're giving in return, it's a lot easier to argue that we're worthy of their investments. I think I serve on about 14 boards, and hopefully I am perceived as a leader that gives back.

Rural Community College President Eight:

Presidents are pretty visible in their community and pretty active in terms of leadership roles and different committees and churches and activities and those kinds of things, and you want that relationship to be one of a personal relationship. You don't want it to be seen as, "Well, here comes the president again, you know, asking for some funds to support the institution." So, that's always in my mind. You know, golly, I just saw Joe the other day and I had an ask out for him, and I see him again and I go over to shake his hand, "Joe, I'm not here to ask for money today. How're you doing? How's the family?" And that kind of thing. So, in one sense you guard it because you don't want to be seen as the person who will be asking all the time. On the other hand, you just want people to know that without them and their support the college can't advance in terms of meeting the scholarship goals or other goals that the fundraising has set for the institution. So, the proper balance, and I think presidents are really positive people, but in my mind, I have to get beyond that aspect of, well, you know, I don't want them to think that this is going to be an ask again. I want them to know this is a personal visit without them having to be concerned about me asking. So, it's had an effect in that sense.

When posed with the interview sub-question related to pressing issues for future rural community college presidents, the following themes emerged: funding; better public relations; and the changing landscape. Concerning this sub-question, these answers were given:

Funding. The lack of funding to rural community colleges is a major problem for the long-term sustainability of higher education in geographically isolated regions.

Rural Community College President One:

Look at the tiers of higher education. See what happens. The majority of students in college in Oklahoma are at community colleges. Legislators don't seem to grasp that, that we are that open door. We are that vehicle of change that will give them their end goal of wanting more people paying taxes. Better revenue streams for the state comes from giving them an opportunity to go to college. And that is the challenge that – I do not envy new presidents, because the days of money being a great tool that you could do whatever you want to do with are gone. You have to run your college like a business, and the only way you can stay in business is to have good return on investment. That's our greatest challenge.

Rural Community College President Two:

I hate to say it, but it's money. I could probably go on and on, but it all comes down to money and . . . I mean, I could say other things, but the number one challenge is money; the lack thereof, and the trickling down of what there is. We come last on the totem pole, so to speak, but I don't see that changing. I think that we'll have to find new sources.

Rural Community College President Three:

Well, unfortunately, it goes back to funding. You know, we are still having to cut positions. Here we're talking about fundraising, and I had to cut my fundraising office this year, my institutional advancement office, which had a two FTE. So, that's all gone, and that's going to kill us over time. I hope that we can get those positions back, where we hire those crucial people back and open the offices back up, but it's a shame that we're having to make those types of decisions because, back to what I said earlier, to make your institution better, you either have to get grants or you have to go out and raise private dollars. And it's tough as a community college to raise private dollars. I'm doing a 10-year report on everything that I've done since I've been president, and I've not been proud of my fundraising. That's probably the area that I've been most disappointed in during my presidency. I haven't always had good people in those roles, and as a person, an individual, it's hard for me to get out and raise money, even though I know – I mean, I have two or three potential million-dollar donors on the hook. It's just a matter of getting there and getting to them for different programs and projects, but it goes back to time. But it's just incredibly difficult alone, and that's where you need a lot of help. I'm a little over 2.8 million in donations and gifts since I've been president, and it really needs to be about five or six, to be honest with you. I should be at the five or six-million-dollar mark by now, but it's just been hard, and there's a whole list of federal government issues and things that we've had to deal with over the years that have eaten up a lot of my time as well. It's all about time. Seven days a week is just not enough time. And you want to leave people alone on weekends, even though I have met with plenty of donors on weekends trying to build those relationships over the years. It's just tough, but you have to try. You have to get out and try and make those efforts.

Rural Community College President Five:

Funding is the number one issue in this state. I'm beginning to feel the pressures of fear of consolidation and losing ground on our service area as well. I believe that we play such a vital role and do so much for students and communities in our service area. And I think, as the times are tight, that's going to be a constant threat. I think that may be what we're looking at, having to fight off those types of threats.

Rural Community College President Six:

Well, it sounds like a broken record, but again, it's budget and resources because we have all of these initiatives we're supposed to put in place, but they all take money and people. We're a service industry, and if we have to keep cutting our workforce, we can't provide the services to the students they need. In 2009, 75% of our funding came from state allocations. This year, 25% comes from state allocations. We've already seen that flip, where we're public aided; we're not really public institutions. We're having to operate more like private schools, and that's increased tuition and fees. Our students and families are paying more, and then it's also the streamlining. I mean, your topic is so timely because before, if something came to our institutions as a gift, that was just nice. It wasn't an expectation. It wasn't a need that we had to go out and do that, but now that's

going to become more and more of our budget mix. And it's really more challenging in the two-year institutions because, while people have a great experience with us and we prepare them for the next step, the majority of people, when they leave, have an affinity for their bachelor's degree-granting institution. That's their identity. Even though we're the foundation, their identity rests where they earned their four-year degree. There's that added challenge as well.

Rural Community College President Eight:

It is establishing the fiscal resources to sustain yourself, and in my thoughts, it will be a combination of state appropriations and fundraising that will ensure your sustainability. And if I had to put a ratio on state appropriation it has to be heavily state appropriation at 95%. Now, I know we won't get 95% of our funding from the state legislature, but in order to sustain yourself, state appropriations must be 95% of that sustainability with development being another 5% making up the difference there. That's going to be a challenge from both aspects, legislative appropriation and from your rural college location. Again, not many well-known national businesses to tap into. You can try writing grants, but grants have an end date. You're not going to sustain yourself on grants. But with the proper engine in place, I think you can grow your own and you can get 5% to help you, from the fundraising standpoint, to help you sustain yourself and remain relevant, but it will be a challenge.

Better public relations. Presidents must find better ways to promote the student successes, faculty and staff achievements, and institutional accomplishments of their colleges on holistic levels. Positive outcomes from positive messaging could manifest in the form of support from multiple stakeholders.

Rural Community College President Four:

I don't think that we, higher education in general, and in particular in the rural two-year colleges, have done a good enough job in certain circles telling our story, bringing our successes forward, and sharing the lives that have been changed at our institutions through the opportunities we provide. We all have amazing success stories out there, and I don't think that we get credit for it, but it's our fault because we don't talk about it. Presidents need to talk about these things and continue to educate everyone that'll listen and promote the value of what we're doing. Our role is to provide students with the basic knowledge that they need, but also in the process, affect the way that people think, the way they make decisions, and prepare them to be lifelong learners because that's their jobs. And we're preparing people for jobs that don't even exist yet.

Rural Community College President Seven:

I think it's the greatest challenge, but also the greatest opportunity, is that this group of experienced leaders, who have devoted their lifetime or are devoting their lifetime to the betterment of Oklahoma and the people of Oklahoma, need to take charge of their own future, instead of being victims to politics or victims to systems of governance or organizational structure. I think it's incumbent upon the presidents to exhibit leadership, to say this is where we're going; this isn't a ride, a joy ride, or a collision course waiting to happen. This is an opportunity to chart the future, and I think that presidents need to be the ones responsible to do that. It's kind of like those things when you swing for the fences, you're going to be a lot better off, whether you get to the fences or not. So, I don't believe in engaging in any kind of activity unless you believe in your heart that you can achieve it. And I think it's fair to say most presidents wouldn't be comfortable with that challenge, for lots of reasons. Some of them, it's not in their DNA. Some of them aren't experienced enough yet. Some of them haven't had a chance to process what that would mean or look like or how to do it. So, they'll be a lot of challenges to be able to put that idea or ideal into motion, but is it doable? Why, hell yeah, it's doable!

Changing landscape. The declination of rural America presents major challenges to the long-term survival of rural serving colleges.

Rural Community College President Six:

The population is dwindling in rural Oklahoma. The people with resources are dwindling as well because people aren't coming back to our communities. They're taking their education and going off, which is fine, but the local relationships that we have and the people who might have the resources, who could make a difference for our institutions, are changing as well. People are giving differently in our part of the state than they were before, when the oil checks were coming in every month or they just received a land lease. Or, you had the energy companies willing to support local projects, but now their resources are focused in different areas.

Table 8

Themes from Research Question Five

Research Question 5	How do rural community college presidents describe their proudest fundraising accomplishments?
Theme:	Building projects
Theme:	Relationship based gifts

Research Question 5: Proudest Fundraising Accomplishment

Many rural community college presidents in Oklahoma have achieved major

accomplishments in fundraising. Two themes emerged from the participant interviews describing their proudest fundraising accomplishments: building projects and relationship based gifts.

Building Projects: Rural community college campus sites grow and improve through capital fundraising for physical structural development.

Rural Community College President Two:

I would say probably I'm kind of a builder. I'm most proud of my projects that have to do with capital planning and then raising the money, building buildings, or cutting a ribbon on a brand new health science building that we added on to an existing building, and it'll be about 55,000 square feet of space for the health programs. And then, in the spring, we will be going out for bid on a new science and agriculture building. We've put 120 lights on our campus through a capital campaign. We never had campus lights and landscaping. There was never really any landscaping because there's no water, you know. Nobody irrigated anything. You didn't want to put any fertilizer on the lawn because you didn't want to have to mow it extra. Campus beautification, making this a place where people wanted to be and hang out and stay, and then in the future, support for other students. And then we've also expanded our land holdings. We've bought property around the campus for a farming operation, a ranching operation.

Rural Community College President Three:

Another big gift was our investment and earned award for a radio license, and it really didn't cost us much, only about \$3,000. Also, we needed a broadcast tower and [communication company] was looking to build a tower in our area and needed a place to put it, so they approached us about putting it up on our campus. That happened because of my relationship with [communication company]. It goes back to that relationship building concept, and I knew the president of Oklahoma [communication company], and we had a regional [communication company] rep that was on our foundation board at the time. So, it was through these conversations this all happened. Well, this was a \$645,000 gift back to the college. They donated the tower back to [the college]. We could not have done that, period. So, we basically, (this is one of my return investment stories) bought a radio license for about three grand, and it was a 6,000-watt station. We petitioned to the Federal Communications Commission to bump that up to a 25,000-watt station, which didn't cost us anything. We got the \$645,000 gift. Our college invested about a \$140,000 or \$150,000 in equipment, and ultimately, now, if we tried to sell that on the private market, it's probably worth 1.2-million. So, basically, we took a \$3,000 investment and turned it into a 1.2 million-dollar asset. I love stuff like that. That's one of the best gifting donations at the college that we've had.

Rural Community College President Five:

We have a major capital effort going on right now to build a new athletic facility, and we're looking at it to be a great draw for the community for tournaments, as well as for the legacy of our outstanding sports programs. We currently use a [city] facility that we lease for a dollar a year, and it was a WPA project with bleachers that are falling in and light poles that are wooden and not all that safe. They've done a lot to make it cosmetically nice, but it's not at the caliber that we feel our program deserves. I think we've had great success on the campaign, receiving funding from our local city government, from our tourism council, and from a private foundation that all totals over one-million dollars. And that's been in the last few months, but not to my credit, but I'm going to take credit since it's under my presidency. I was involved, but it was really the president emeritus doing most of the work.

Relationship Based Gifts: Financial gifts gained through relationship development with donors provide great institutional advantages including: scholarships, endowed professorships, additional faculty positions, and capital improvements.

Rural Community College President One:

The other day – I walked to the end of the hallway and I saw a little old lady – and when I say little old lady, in her seventies or eighties – in a cotton dress – I mean, wasn't dressed elaborately, just a little old lady. And I walked up to her and I said, "Ma'am, may I help you find something?" And she said, "No, I've just never been to the college and I wanted to look around." And I said, "Well, what would you like to see. Maybe I can walk around and show you some things." So, we spent about an hour walking around the campus, visiting. And I took her through several buildings. I told her about all our programs. I introduced her to some people. And as we were getting ready to leave she says, "What do you do at the college? Are you a professor here?" And I said, "No. I'm the president." And she said, "You took an hour out of your schedule to walk with me around this campus?" I said, "Ma'am, there's nothing more important that I do than tell people about this college." Within a month there was a \$10,000 check delivered to my office, and she's written me a \$10,000 check per month ever since.

Rural Community College President Three:

We recently received a million-dollar gift from an alumnus on the west coast. It's the largest scholarship endowment in [our college's] history, and ironically enough, it's the fourth million-dollar plus gift in our history. For a small rural college, that's pretty good. But this is the first million-dollar gift I received, and honestly, as I've been on the national stage, million-dollar gifts are the standard in terms of being recognized as a really good gift. Now, you know, large universities get five to 10-million dollar gifts from time to time. According to our standards, if you get a million-dollar gift at a community college, that's pretty good. It's really good. But we negotiated a deal with this

donor to put \$750,000 of that gift into endowed scholarships, which is by far the largest endowment we've ever had. We're going to use the \$250,000 to endow a faculty chair position in the arts because we know that we've cut out some of the arts positions due to budget cuts. The state of Oklahoma will match that. So, this gift turned from a 1 million to a 1.25 million-dollar gift because of the state match that will happen. And so, you have to be creative in those things. How can you leverage those funds to make things happen? We've done a little bit of that over the years as well.

Rural Community College President Four:

I serve on the hospital board in one of our host cities for [a campus site]. During a board meeting, the hospital administrators told me that they would hire 35 to 40 nurses today if they were available. We actually had reduced the number of student admissions to our nursing program due to a lack of faculty members. As we were communicating that during the meeting, I told the hospital CEO, you know, with the budget situation the way it is, I'm not going to be able to hire those positions back. But, we may reconsider our stance if we could get some help funding a couple of positions. A few more key meetings followed, and now [the hospital in our service area] has provided a \$500,000 gift that we use to help fund nursing faculty positions and academic scholarships.

Rural Community College President Six:

A lot of fundraising is planting seeds so you really don't know how things will work out, particularly with planned giving. That's what I focus on when I meet with people or speak to groups; I talk about planned giving. One of our nicest gifts in the last six or seven years was a planned gift from a local woman who just liked the sciences and math, so STEM was an easy way for us to point our focus. We endowed two chairs in the math and sciences division and received matching funds from the state. Some of the funds provided equipment in our science program, which has helped ease capital purchasing in that area. I think your real work is helping people feel connected, and I wouldn't say that I really have received a big gift, huge; but we don't have as many large gift opportunities in the smaller schools. I host the galas and stuff like that, but the real gifts come from the coffee shops and the churches. That's where people get to know you, and then you just find the right time and the right project to match them with the approach.

Rural Community College President Seven:

In the last year or so, we've secured our largest gift in the history of [the college], and a seven-figure gift, which is the first time that's ever happened. And, it's for the fine and performing arts. If you've been in rural education in the last 20 years, the one thing that you see is the gradual decay and de-evolution of arts in education. Don't have the money, don't have the teachers, don't have the interest, not as important as athletics, blah, blah, blah. So, we chased this gift. I personally chased this gift for about six years, and it ultimately became an estate gift. It will set the stage for this small college to be able to protect the fine and performing arts for the foreseeable future. That's something I think

the college will be proud to have: music programs, theatre programs, art degrees, all the things that would be easy to scrap in tough times.

The second thing would be to secure the three-quarters of a million-dollar gift from a city that went out of business. Most people know that far northeast Oklahoma has some old mining towns that have shut down, sort of one-by-one over the last two or three decades, largely because of environmental issues and challenges. Well, about seven or eight years ago, one of these towns was preparing to close down. I knew the town attorney. I asked him how much money that town had as it was preparing to close. It had 1.1 million dollars. They didn't know what they were going to do with it, but they were getting ready to turn out the lights and lock the doors at city hall and close their town down. And so, I'm sitting in this little bitty vacant town with three city council members and a mayor and a city attorney, as they're passing the resolution to close down this town. As part of that resolution, they gifted \$750,000 to [the college], in exchange for us keeping the history of that town alive, and that I give any scholarships to any family members who were ever associated with that town. So, since that day seven years ago, that \$750,000 gift is now an endowment worth 1.1 million. We have hosted eight straight school reunions since 2010 that draws over 1,000 people every [year] and we've given out 74 scholarships to either kids or grandkids or nieces, nephews, who had relations with this little town.

Rural Community College President Eight:

We were able to raise enough funds to pay off the note on our dormitory early. Matter of fact, year and a half early, and we did that through just visits and friend relationships and what have you. And, you know, five thousand here, five thousand here, and before you know it, we reached a point where we were able to do it, and I think that's been the most successful accomplishment through fundraising so far.

Summary

This qualitative study was designed to present analyzed data gathered from the five research questions related to: (a) professional roles in fundraising; (b) necessary personal and professional characteristics for effective fundraising; (c) perceptions relating prior fundraising experience to current and future success; (d) impact of fundraising pressures on presidential performance; and (e) proudest fundraising accomplishments. Several themes emerged from the eight interviews of rural community college presidents in Oklahoma. The major themes from the participant interviews describing professional roles in fundraising were: relationship building, observance as the "face of the institution", and vision. Other themes outlining the necessary

personal and professional characteristics for effectiveness in fundraising included: genuineness, personal connection, and communication.

There were a number of themes that emerged from the participant interviews characterizing how prior fundraising experience contributed to current and future fundraising success. Questions specifying how prepared participants were for fundraising when they entered their current presidential roles presented three emerging themes: not prepared; moderately prepared; and well prepared. Another interview question illustrated how perceptions of prior fundraising experience contributed to current and future fundraising success related to professional roles in fundraising, which produced four main themes: relationships; investments; external funding; and learning from failure.

Numerous themes emerged from the participant interviews interpreting how the pressures for fundraising success impacted overall presidential performance. Two main themes emerged in connection with changes in the community college presidency: resources and competition, while themes linked to the greatest challenges facing rural community college presidents included: decreasing population, funding, maintaining quality faculty and staff members, and morale. Another interview question designating how multiple fundraising pressures affect presidential performance affirmed these major themes: stress; balance; and negative perception. Moreover, the question related to pressing issues for future rural community college presidents produced these emerging themes: funding; better public relations; and the changing landscape.

Two themes emerged from the participant interviews describing their proudest fundraising accomplishments: building projects and relationship based gifts. Some presidents discussed current and future building projects afforded by donor gifts and capital campaigns. Other presidents presented examples of beneficial donor relationships that produced a variety of

institutional rewards ranging from debt repayment to endowments.

Although the study produced many emerging themes associated with the research questions, the central theme of all interviews was funding. All presidential participants made multiple references to the lack of funding, and how those shortfalls negatively impacted other functions of their job duties and institutional responsibilities. The vast majority of multi-faceted challenges associated with rural community college presidency leadership demands described in the study were directly and/or indirectly related to funding.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of rural community college presidents in Oklahoma as to their roles and involvement in fundraising. The list of study participants included all eight rural community college presidents currently serving in the state of Oklahoma. Study participants provided a wealth of information related to fundraising, challenges, and positive practice associated with college presidency in rural serving areas that can provide a foundational framework for other community college presidents to follow as they establish solutions for growing financial challenges. This chapter will include a discussion of study findings, limitations, recommendations for future research, and implications for improved practice.

Overview of the Study

Qualitative case study research methods were employed to gather data for this study of Oklahoma rural community college presidents. Semi-structured interviews, field notes, and secondary source reviews were utilized to triangulate data to ensure that findings were accurate, reliable, and trustworthy. Study findings were then categorized into themes according to the five study research questions. This section presents those research questions and associated findings.

Research Question 1: How do community college presidents describe their professional roles in fundraising?

The responses to the study's first research question presented three prominent emergent themes: relationship building; being the "face of the institution"; and establishing and communicating the vision. The results suggested that the development of fundamental presidential roles associated with fundraising was crucial to the economic viability of the rural colleges those presidents represented. Other results indicated how these presidential roles

correlated with the public perceptions of the institutions based upon interaction and the fostering of rapport.

Most of the presidential participants described the role of relationship building as a primary component of importance in the fundraising process. A variety of relationship building examples and strategies were provided during the interview process including: building relationships with potential donors and alumni members; strengthening relationships with representatives of commerce through business partnerships and economic development; reinforcing positive relationships with students, faculty, and staff members; and, nurturing relationships within the local service community to secure the institutional brand and image through positive and proactive representation. All of these relationship building actions aided in the growth of fundraising potentialities.

Many participants described one of their key roles as serving as the “face of the institution,” which carried a great deal of pressure and responsibility. This role established the presidents as the prominent representatives of their colleges in all operational and functional areas of the community ranging from public relations to civic engagement. Thus, presidents must stay well versed and familiarized with all aspects of education, local/regional politics, and community news in order to fairly represent the people of their service regions.

Other participants explained the importance of being visionary in fundraising roles. These presidents described how the process of strategic fundraising goal development incorporated institutional missions, capital building projects, and academic planning. They also expressed the need for effective communication promoting the institutional vision to ensure strategic goals were met, and donors were satisfied.

Research Question 2: Which personal and professional characteristics do current rural community college presidents describe as necessary for effectiveness in fundraising?

The responses to the study's second research question presented three prominent emergent themes: genuineness, personal connection, and communication. The results proposed that certain personal and professional characteristics enabled presidents to become more successful in fundraising efforts.

A proportionate number of presidential participants claimed that genuineness was a vital characteristic for presidential effectiveness. They argued that community college presidents must be viewed with a great level of sincerity from donors, peers, community members, and students in all aspects of college relations, especially in fundraising. The justification provided from respondents was founded in the idea that donors must believe their monetary gifts are being applied to worthy projects related to student success, as relayed to them by the presidents.

All participants agreed that the ability to personally connect with people is mandatory for community college presidents, especially in geographically isolated areas. The competency to build meaningful relationships with various individuals and groups was identified as a precondition to the maximization of fundraising opportunities and gifts. Participants elucidated the aptitude for relating to diverse populations in rural areas was integral to soliciting those external funds.

Most respondents said the ability to communicate effectively was essential to presidential fundraising efforts. This communication was described in a wide array including: the ability to communicate institutional vision to current stakeholders and potential donors; positive communication with a variety of people on the appropriate levels; and, communicating in a multiple mediums and platforms. Every one of these communication components were listed as integral

abilities for fundraising endeavors.

Research Question 3: How do current rural community college presidents describe and perceive prior fundraising experience as contributing to current and future fundraising success?

There were a number of themes related to the study's third research question that emerged from the participant responses characterizing how prior fundraising experience contributed to current and future fundraising success. The interview guide (Appendix D) included sub-questions that were linked to this research question. These sub-questions measured fundraising preparedness and the relationship of prior fundraising experience on current fundraising activity held by the presidential participants.

The sub-question measuring how prepared participants were for fundraising when they entered their current presidential roles confirmed that the presidents entered their current positions with varying levels of fundraising experience. Three participants stated that they entered their presidential roles with little or no fundraising experience. Three participants declared that they entered their presidential roles with moderate fundraising experience. Only two participants articulated that they entered their presidential roles with adequate to excellent fundraising experience.

The other sub-question related to research question three illustrated how perceptions of prior fundraising experience contributed to current and future fundraising success. Participants drew responses from their previous fundraising experience to answer this question. The presidential responses to this question produced four main themes: relationships; investments; external funding; and learning from failure.

Respondents reiterated the importance of positive relationships in the fundraising process. Participants explained how the previous development and cultivation of strong relationships with community members provided a solid foundation for current and future fundraising pursuits. These pursuits included capital campaigns, scholarship drives, and business/industry partnerships.

Other participants discussed innovative investment strategies that produced strong fundraising outcomes for those rural community college presidents who explored market options. These presidents described how paradigm shifts in traditional market investment beliefs led to more aggressive strategies that produced higher yielding returns for their colleges. The respondents also stressed the importance of presidential learning and involvement in the financial investment environment.

All participants relayed the need for external funding due to budgetary constraints within the state. Such fiscal challenges have forced rural community college presidents to explore multiple funding options as supplementary revenue sources for their perspective institutions. A variety of external fundraising strategies were outlined by the participants, including: business and industry partnerships; pursuance of federal grants and private foundational awards; collaboration with local/regional Native American tribes; creation of presidential partnership programs for unrestricted fund solicitation; and various traditional fundraising activities.

Some presidents discussed the importance of self-reflection in unsuccessful fundraising endeavors, or learning from their failures. One participant explained how knowledge gained from self-reflective assessment related to unsuccessful fundraising efforts contributed a great wealth of information for future endeavors. This president claimed there was significant value in understanding what doesn't work in fundraising, compared to what does work.

Research Question 4: How do current rural community college presidents describe the impact of pressures for fundraising success on their overall presidential performance?

The responses to the study's fourth research question presented numerous themes depicting how the pressures for fundraising success impacted overall presidential performance. The interview guide (Appendix D) contained sub-questions that were linked to this research question. These sub-questions addressed relevant issues for rural community college presidents including current challenges, future challenges, and the effect of multiple fundraising pressures on presidential performance.

The first sub-question linked to research question four reviewed changes in the community college presidency. The presidential responses to this question produced two main themes: resources and competition.

All of the respondents commented on the growing pressure associated with fundraising to fill budget gaps that have progressively increased in the state of Oklahoma. These presidents alluded to the political difficulties of their work with state legislators who ultimately control allocation levels to their colleges, which are relied upon heavily in community college systems. Other discussions compared current funding levels in increased service populations to former funding levels that were substantially greater with smaller student enrollment numbers.

Many presidents described the expanding competitive market as a major stressor in the modern operational landscape. Participants characterized the recruitment market within student populations as an aggressive competition between colleges and universities across the state. This signaled a dramatic shift from previous recruitment models, where community colleges and universities did not typically compete for the same students. Respondents claimed that decreased

budgets and declining traditional student populations in service markets broadened the demand for new recruits statewide.

The second sub-question associated with research question four addressed the greatest challenges facing rural community college presidents. The presidential responses to this question formed four major themes: decreasing population, funding, maintaining quality faculty and staff members, and morale.

Participants listed decreasing population in rural Oklahoma as a considerable challenge for their presidencies. These presidents described service areas that were depleted of opportunities due to lost industry and natural resource development. Further explanation revealed how such lost opportunities have driven people away from rural settings into the direction of urbanized regions where more opportunities exist. Such migration has shrunk the target markets for rural community colleges in the areas of student recruitment and fundraising.

Every participant addressed the lack of funding as a major challenge for their presidencies. They described how continued budget cuts forced them to eliminate key positions, student services, and academic enrichment programs. These eliminations have led to decreased student satisfaction, declines in enrollment numbers, and lower morale across the board.

Other respondents listed the recruitment and maintenance of quality faculty and staff members was a major problem. They outlined the challenging employment trends in Oklahoma regarding teacher pay, benefits for educators, and overall state support of higher education. These presidents further expounded on the stringent accreditation standards governing their institutions, whereas instructors must adhere to higher level credentialing requirements to qualify for college employment. The combination of these operational factors were depicted as virtually impossible by the presidential participants in the study.

According to several participants, maintaining positive morale throughout their institutions was a serious concern. These presidents revealed how funding losses led to employment elimination, benefit reductions, unpaid furloughs, and spending freezes. This action forced employees to take on more work responsibility for no added, and in some cases, reduced pay. Consequently, fundraising efforts have suffered as well due to low morale.

The third interview sub-question connected to research question four specified how multiple fundraising pressures affected presidential performance. The presidential responses to this question affirmed these themes: stress; balance; and negative perception.

A number of participants discussed the intense stress levels associated with fundraising and presidential performance. These presidents chronicled the constant pressures of fundraising expectations by governing boards and community constituents in difficult economic and political climates. Other respondents expressed the need to develop mental and emotional toughness in order to function in the current presidential role.

Several presidents acknowledged the hardship of maintaining balance between fundraising responsibilities and general duties of the presidency. Participants voiced frustrations about the growing demands of fundraising expectations from a conglomerate of stakeholders. Furthermore, they explained that intensified fundraising efforts reduced their time and effort in the daily operational responsibilities at their institutions. This proportionate challenge of maintaining balance was reported as a sizable difficulty for presidents.

A few participants warned that negative perceptions could develop through aggressive fundraising. They conveyed the negative imagery that can spread throughout donor populations from constant presidential fund solicitation. Presidents said that they must remain cognizant of proper social expectations to avoid awkwardness and eventual loss of donors.

The final sub-question related to research question four defined the pressing issues for future rural community college presidents. The presidential responses to this question produced these emerging themes: funding; better public relations; and the changing landscape.

All study participants agreed that funding was the most pressing issue of concern for future rural community college leaders in Oklahoma. These presidents pointed to the funding process for community college allocations within the state, and argued that the long-term viability of the system was in danger due to fiscal shortfalls. They also expressed concerns about increased reliance on privatized funds in rural areas, due to limited resources and higher competition.

Most participants agreed that rural community college presidents must mount positive public relations campaigns in the future to gain and maintain support. These respondents claimed that there was a need to take more aggressive and proactive approaches in relaying their messages of success. Specific examples of notable success outlined by the respondents included student testimonials, community support messages, and college accomplishments.

Another participant described the changing landscape in rural Oklahoma as a difficult challenge to face in the future. This president illustrated that declining populations in rural Oklahoma have led to negative impacts on many colleges in a variety of ways including: declination in potential student enrollment; loss of traditional donor dollars through population migration and economic deficiencies; and diminishing gifts from private sectors of natural resources sectors. All of these issues in rural areas of the state create significant obstacles for future presidents to overcome.

Research Question 5: How do rural community college presidents describe their proudest fundraising accomplishments?

Participant feedback from research question five describing their proudest fundraising accomplishments included an assortment of impressive presidential achievements. The following two themes emerged from this question: building projects and relationship based gifts.

A few presidents listed current and future building projects as their greatest fundraising accomplishments. These projects ranged from athletic facilities to campus radio stations, and were all being financed through capital campaigns and donations. All of these presidents explained how vital fundraising was to the growth of individual campus sites in terms of structural building and renovation.

Other presidents explained how their work with donors produced major institutional rewards. These respondents expounded that their willingness to establish and maintain positive relationships with individuals within their service communities led to monetary gifts for their colleges. Such gifts were utilized to finance scholarships, new faculty positions, endowments, facilities, and even debt repayment. Thus, these presidents expressed the importance of fostering personal relationships in fundraising.

Discussion of the Findings and Conclusions

The following section includes a discussion of study findings, review of the literature, and conclusions drawn from the data gathered during participant interviews and secondary source review related to the five research questions. This study offers research findings to increase the understanding of the essential factors for practice in fundraising, while providing a foundational framework for community college presidents to follow as they form possible strategies to address fiscal challenges.

Research Question 1: How do community college presidents describe their professional roles in fundraising?

Economic shortfalls in Oklahoma have forced rural community college presidents to expand their fundraising roles. Study participants defined their presidential roles in fundraising in an assortment of ways; however, the main themes presented from the interviews centered on relationship building, being the “face of the institution,” and establishing and communicating the vision. The following discussion will further explain these themes and how they coincide with research literature.

McGee (2003) contended that the bulk majority of the donor population expects access and interaction with the college president. Therefore, presidents need to massage these relationships to grow fundraising opportunities. Rural community college presidents must constantly engage in the relationship building process, developing and cultivating bonds with multiple constituents. Such constituencies include: current and potential students, staff, faculty, community members, civic leaders, legislators, business and industry professionals, and alumni. Increased demand for personal interaction with donors is particularly challenging for rural community college presidents in Oklahoma. Many respondents described these challenges during the interview process, explaining how continued budget cuts have forced the elimination of key fundraising personnel, placing more relationship based roles on the serving presidents. Gentile (2009) concluded that the small foundational staffing in most community colleges places those institutions at a great disadvantage in funds solicitation compared to larger institutions.

Bakhit (2011) explained that presidents need to continually survey the resource needs of the institution, and then utilize all available fundraising resources to fill those needs. Several study participants described this type of action in Oklahoma rural community colleges. These

presidents worked with business and industry leaders to fund new academic programs, scholarships, and faculty positions. They created capital campaigns with alumni members to build new campus facilities. Additionally, they served as legislative, academic, and civic liaisons within their service communities to garner support for their institutions.

Presidents must serve as the primary “face of the institution,” representing their respective colleges, as well as the communities they serve in many areas. Miller (2013) concluded that presidents must maintain the lead role on fundraising teams, regardless of development staff size and support. These administrators are expected to be involved in leadership roles throughout their communities including civic organizations, legislative forums, and community action groups. This sentiment holds true more succinctly in rural areas where the number of highly educated individuals is dramatically less than urban areas. Many study participants alluded to this challenging situation in their own presidential roles, where they are expected to: provide all academic information for their service communities; maintain training needs for business and industry; and, serve on all civic engagement boards and committees.

Karnes (2008) reasoned that presidents needed universal buy-in to fully enact institutional vision. McGee (2003) expressed the need for visionary fundraising goal development in capital campaigns. Vision is imperative to the fundraising success of college presidents, especially in rural areas. Presidents must utilize all available resources to create a fundraising vision for their colleges before they can establish specific goals, objectives, and strategies. Then, they must inform the multiple stakeholders about the vision, as well as the plan to achieve the vision. Presidents also carry the charge to forecast future effects concerning the service environment, so they can adequately prepare for whatever may arise. Potential changes in legislation, funding allocations, and laws related to higher education must be observed and

absorbed by these presidents, so appropriate action plans can be advanced and applied.

According to Feinberg (2012), “college presidents always need to be peering around the bend, ensuring that our institutions remain not only relevant, but are also leading in building bridges to the work force and global society” (p. 40). Feinberg (2012) continues:

The real payoff occurs on commencement day, watching thousands of students walk across the stage to cap an achievement that many never dreamed was possible. To play a small part in changing the trajectory of a single life is a special moment each time it happens. (p. 40)

Moments of this kind are provided through dedicated fundraising work and require strong vision from the presidents who serve the greater educational cause.

Presidential participants outlined many of their visionary practices over the course of this study. Such practices can serve as models for fundraising execution for other presidents in similar positions. Some presidents utilized financial market analysis to become more aggressive in college investments which led to greater returns. Other presidents seized opportunities in social and economic settings to increase institutional wealth through property acquisitions and land development. Additionally, presidents tracked alumni and community success stories through various outlets, so they could generate donation opportunities. All of these visionary practices could be emulated by other rural community college presidents.

Research Question 2: Which personal and professional characteristics do current rural community college presidents describe as necessary for effectiveness in fundraising?

Study participants discussed the importance of developing the necessary characteristics for effective fundraising in rural Oklahoma, due to the limited donor population and cultural expectations of their service communities. These presidential participants described the necessary personal and professional characteristics for fundraising effectiveness throughout the

interview process. Genuineness, personal connection, and communication emerged as the themes for this research question.

Caboni's (2010) research implied that moral boundaries in fundraising practice still do exist and those fundraising institutions that focus on professionalism are more successful in terms of total funds raised. Study participants described how important sincerity was with donors in their rural serving communities. These presidents expounded that people in their target markets wanted to see positive results associated with their donations, did not want to be bothered by aggressive solicitation, and they wanted truthful representations of institutional intentions related to raised funds. Rural community college presidents should conduct fundraising ventures through genuine and sincere means. Campaigns need to be designed with realistic goals and expectations, while processes must occur in honest and transparent ways to retain the trust of donors and community constituents. Monies obtained from fundraising activities need to be spent in the correct manner according to the ethical contract agreed upon by the college and the donor. Caboni (2010) reasoned that presidents must continually self-regulate fundraising activities to ensure the donors and the institutions maintain positive and healthy working relationships.

Miller's (2013) study revealed that the ability to personally connect with people on an individual level is the most necessary attribute for fundraising leaders. Presidents must build meaningful personal connections with various individuals and groups to expand fundraising opportunities. These leaders need to use interaction as a method to establish commonalities, inform the public, and build relationships that will serve as a foundation for future fundraising pursuits. Rural community college presidents in Oklahoma have relied heavily on personal connection in fundraising pursuits according to the study respondents. These presidents

discussed how personal connection with alumni, business leaders, legislators, and community members has led to multiple financial gifts and added incentives for their colleges. Presidents need to learn from these illustrated examples to broaden connection in their own service areas.

The community college presidency requires the ability to communicate effectively through assorted mediums in fundraising efforts. Written communication, private meetings, public speaking engagements, and group presentations are all mandatory aspects of presidential communication. Curry et al., (2012) determined that institutions experienced fundraising success through the implementation of missional communications strategies. Furthermore, Wenrich and Reid (2003) stressed the importance of the president's ability to fit the institution's needs to the individual donor's needs. Strong communication is an essential competency for community college administrators, especially presidents who carry the burden of fiscal survival (McNair, Duree, and Ebbers, 2011). All of the study participants expressed the importance of good communication skills in their fundraising responsibilities.

Research Question 3: How do current rural community college presidents describe and perceive prior fundraising experience as contributing to current and future fundraising success?

Besikof (2010) found that all presidential participants in his study felt that their previous positions did not provide adequate fundraising training, preparation, and professional development. This finding appears to correlate with most Oklahoma rural community college presidents. The majority of study participants claimed that they entered their presidential roles with little to moderate fundraising experience. Most of these respondents admitted that they had insufficient training and experience in fundraising when they became president at their current institutions. Some of these presidents came from academic operational areas that were not

centered on fiscal affairs or development work. Others explained that their fundraising experience was limited to small activity-driven fundraisers which was not comparable to the scale required in their presidential roles. However, they all agreed that fundraising had not been a heavy priority until the past few years when massive budget cuts had occurred within the state.

Pinchback (2011) explained that this trend is not geographically isolated, and in fact is a national problem for community colleges. Historically, community colleges have relied heavily on state allocations and other localized tax-generated revenue sources for operational funding. Therefore, these institutions did not focus efforts in fundraising. However, economic hardships across the country have forced these presidents to explore new funding options. Unfortunately, rural community colleges enter the fundraising market behind four-year colleges and private institutions in terms of proven experience, solid strategic plans for practice, and the employment of qualified professionals.

Due to the lack of existing training and development opportunities in Oklahoma rural community college systems related to fundraising, future presidents should be proactive in current professional work to build a working knowledge of fundraising through professional development, networking, and personal study. These activities could strengthen fundraising preparedness for those future presidents. Established correlation between sufficient preparedness in professional backgrounds and current fundraising success is supported in the literature. Ballinger (2012) determined that there was a strong connection between current presidential fundraising behaviors and individual professional backgrounds. Study participants who began their presidencies well prepared for fundraising activities offered great strategies that have proven to be successful for them. These presidents drew from professional backgrounds in foundational work, institutional financial affairs, successful capital campaigns, and privatized

fundraising to develop and implement current fundraising application in their respective colleges. Such strategies were gained through intense study, relationship building, and self-reflection.

Research Question 4: How do current rural community college presidents describe the impact of pressures for fundraising success on their overall presidential performance?

Rural community college presidents in Oklahoma face tremendous pressure to become better fundraisers due to many reasons including: lack of funding; negative public perceptions; and an eroding landscape for service. Study participants described the impact of these fundraising pressures on their overall presidential performance during their interviews. The following discussion will further explore these issues while comparing them to research literature.

Stickland's (2013) research revealed that even though community colleges have faced funding shortages in the past, today's threats to the entire funding mechanism of the system are unprecedented. The lack of funding to rural community colleges presents significant problems for the long-term sustainability of post-secondary education in geographically isolated regions. All of the study participants expressed frustration related to the massive state legislative cuts to their colleges from reductions in state allocations, resulting in a nearly 30% loss in four years. Presidents of these institutions must work closely with key policy-makers to stabilize and increase all forms of state funding to keep these fiscal losses at a minimum. These presidents must become effective lobbyists with state representatives, learn the workflow of business and industry, and recognize personal needs of donor populations to maximize gains to offset potential losses.

Presidents need to approach fundraising matters with a heightened sense of social awareness and proper behavioral expectations to avoid conflict within the constituencies they

represent. Santovec (2009) found that the viewpoint of a college's image within its community is a major factor for fundraising success or failure. *The New England Journal of Higher Education* (2009) warned that obsessive presidential fundraising can lead to decreased community support. Many presidential participants agreed with this finding, explaining that rural donors in Oklahoma do not respond positively to constant fundraising ploys. Moreover, these respondents claimed that constant fundraising pressures applied to the public could lead to long-term loss of support for their colleges. Negative perceptions associated with the college can be harmful to fundraising pursuits, particularly in rural areas that are historically not supportive of higher education. Carter (2014) found that people living in rural geographic areas tended to display social bias against higher education. Hodson (2010) concluded that presidential engagement in fundraising ventures must carry the same level of relevance as engagement in other important affairs. Therefore, presidents must maintain a delicate balance between fundraising duties and daily job demands.

The deterioration of rural America continues to jeopardize the longevity of rural community colleges. This downturn has dramatically affected the educational landscape in Oklahoma. One presidential respondent described how the declining populations in rural Oklahoma have negatively impacted many state colleges in terms of student enrollment, donor dollars, economic recession, and diminishing allocations. Curry, et al., (2012) determined that even though many rural community college presidents experienced greater fundraising success through relationship building and strategic planning, their institutions continued to suffer financially due to declining student populations. Ryan and Palmer (2005) discovered that student access to higher education is being threatened at record rates because of decreased ties to businesses and industrial parks that have relocated in other countries, which provided

scholarships, internships, part-time jobs, and long-term employment opportunities tied to degree completion. None of these scenarios bode well for rural community colleges. That is why it is so critical for these presidents to promote institutional successes and strengthen working relationships with multiple stakeholders to ensure the long-term survival of their service communities.

Research Question 5: How do rural community college presidents describe their proudest fundraising accomplishments?

Although the fiscal climate in Oklahoma has presented many challenges for rural community college presidents, great innovations in fundraising have led to outstanding financial accomplishments for those serving presidents. Study participants were asked to describe their proudest fundraising accomplishments, which produced the following two emergent themes: building projects and relationship based gifts.

Gentile (2009) defined a new campus landscape in American higher education where students demand expanded facilities and technological innovation. Rural community college presidents must obtain and maintain working knowledge of campus infrastructure and physical plant needs to best serve their students, faculty, staff, and community members. Study participants detailed a wide array of building projects on their campuses, as well as the fundraising strategies that were implemented to finance those projects. Each president elaborated on the added benefits these building projects provided for their campus communities. These projects ranged from student service facilities to academic based structures, and were financed through various fundraising mediums. Respondents expressed the importance of gathering input from multiple constituents in such fundraising matters through surveys, public forums, focus groups, and individual meetings. Shaw and Shaw (2013) concluded that

presidents must include multiple stakeholders in the creation of a fundraising culture to maximize fundraising results. The rectification and utilization of campus building projects presents convincing evidence of these collaborative fundraising cultures.

Presidents must place relationship building with donors at the top of their lists of prioritization. Study participants provided several examples of great fundraising accomplishments gained through personal relationships with donors. Expanded holdings, increased scholarships, additional faculty positions, and debt repayment were all afforded to these presidents' colleges through deals made with friends, civic associates, business partners, and joint collaborators gained from positive working relationships. Respondents explained that this relationship cultivation was even more important in rural serving areas. Miller and Tuttle (2006) confirmed that rural community colleges often serve as the center of activity for their service areas due to geographic isolation. Rural presidents must steadily work to establish and grow these fundraising relationships to increase their odds of success.

Limitations

Several limitations existed in this qualitative study due to various factors including time sensitivity, resource availability and the nature of the research design. The sample size was restricted to one geographic region (the state of Oklahoma), resulting in limited data for comparison and evaluation by community college presidents in other geographic regions of the United States. The information gained from rural Oklahoma community college presidents and their individual experiences and perceptions may differ from rural community college presidents in other states. The small, geographically limited sample size and focus on fundraising rather than multiple forms of resource development, may limit generalizable findings and the transferability of knowledge to multiple settings and researchers.

Recommendations for Future Research

The declining populations and diminishing funding structures in rural America continue to devolve, threatening the survival of rural community colleges. Although the study provided some specific data pertaining to presidential fundraising, there is a lack of major research data related to community college presidential roles in fundraising efforts within rural serving institutions. Some research centered in this area does exist for community college presidents; however, little focus is given to rural serving institutions. Much of the data related to fundraising in terms of presidential roles, responsibilities, and positive attributes is focused more on four-year public and private colleges and universities. Recommendations for future research should include the following studies:

1. A qualitative case study of rural community college fundraising professionals could provide additional information related to effective practices and strategies. This insight could help identify key roles, duties, and required responsibilities that are essential for fundraising success in geographically isolated areas.
2. A qualitative case study defining how rural community college presidents acquire fundraising knowledge and training could be very beneficial for other presidents to reference in their own pursuits. This research study identified weaknesses in the perceived level of fundraising preparation of presidential participants, while displaying the lack of fundraising training opportunities in Oklahoma. Expanding this body of research could provide much needed support for rural presidents.
3. A quantitative survey study of the top-tier rural community colleges in terms of the amount of fundraising dollars generated could provide positive models for fundraising execution at similar institutions. Findings data gathered from the study including

fundraising costs and accumulated returns could aid other presidents in the development of cost versus benefit analysis related to capital campaigns and fundraising activities.

Implications for Improved Practice

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and understand rural community college presidents in Oklahoma through the examination of multiple factors involving the presidency and fundraising, giving community college presidents the tools to develop and implement effective fundraising strategies and practices. Such strategies should address the complex tasks and vital skills required for presidential attainment of fundraising goals.

Recommendations for improved practice include the following:

1. This study can provide guidance for positive practice in presidential fundraising leadership. Presidents of rural serving community colleges must assume the lead roles in all fundraising activities. Even if these institutions are fortunate enough to have fundraising professionals on staff, the presidents serve as the “face of the institutions,” therefore, it is their responsibility to lead fundraising efforts through effective communication, personal relationship maintenance, and genuine solicitation.
2. Additionally, findings from the study could be used in the design of time management plans for presidents related to fundraising. Study data described the massive time commitments required for fundraising activities, as well as the expectations of presidents by multiple stakeholders. Examples of time management approaches utilized to balance the conglomerate of daily presidential expectations and consuming fundraising duties could help other presidents in their own scheduling needs and strategies.
3. The study could also furnish new insight for current and future community college

presidents pertaining to potential benefits in fundraising compared to the costs associated with the effort. Rooney (1999) proposes a methodology for colleges and universities to conduct true cost versus benefit analysis in fundraising efforts. According to Rooney (1999), “the development program should continue to invest more resources into fundraising efforts up to the point where it costs one dollar to raise one dollar” (p. 41). This strategy is supposed to yield maximum resource production if it is followed correctly. Rooney (1999) contends the true value of fundraising should be weighed in terms of mission fulfillment compared to resource allocation. However, financial balance is difficult to maintain even though it is imperative for presidential success. Boards of trustees expect the college president to act as the chief fundraiser, while maintaining high accountability for budgetary issues and fiscal responsibility (Bumphus, 2014).

4. Institutional search committees charged with presidential hiring may reference study findings in job description creation, candidate selection, and interviewing.

5. The findings from this study could be beneficial in leadership training programs developed by the Oklahoma Association of Community Colleges (OACC), Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE), and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). Successful fundraising efforts can lead to campus improvements, increased public support and private gifts, higher internal morale, and ultimately more funding (Shaw & Shaw, 2014). Study results will provide more depth to the limited body of research related to rural serving community college fundraising at the presidential level.

Summary

Great changes to the operational landscape of higher education in Oklahoma have forced

rural community college presidents to change as well. These presidents, who face unprecedented institutional budget cuts due to shortfalls in state allocations, must now become effective fundraisers to ensure the survival of their colleges. This increased need for fundraising has redefined presidential roles, while creating heightened challenges for these leaders to balance growing fundraising pressure with stressful daily job responsibilities.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of eight currently serving rural community college presidents in Oklahoma as to their roles and involvement in fundraising. Five research questions guided the study through the exploration of: (a) professional roles in fundraising; (b) necessary personal and professional characteristics for effective fundraising; (c) perceptions relating prior fundraising experience to current and future success; (d) impact of fundraising pressures on presidential performance; and (e) proudest fundraising accomplishments. The major goal of this research was to provide a greater understanding of rural community college presidents related to their roles and challenges in fundraising. Study participants provided a vast assortment of useful information related to fundraising, personal and professional challenges, and positive practice associated with college presidency in rural serving areas. This body of work includes presidential perspectives, professional advice, and models for successful strategic fundraising practice gained from years of invaluable experience, and complimented with existing literature in fundraising areas.

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APPENDIX A
Request for Participation

October --, 2017

(PRESIDENT)
(COMMUNITY COLLEGE)
(ADDRESS)
(CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE)

Dear (President):

I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Leadership program at the University of Arkansas as well as the president of Carl Albert State College. I know that you are aware of the current budgetary constraints associated with higher education administration in the state of Oklahoma. Additionally, the mounting pressure associated with external revenue generation through fundraising efforts is extremely high for community college presidents throughout the state, particularly in rural serving areas. My dissertation, entitled “Presidential Fundraising: A Multiple Case Study of Rural Oklahoma Community Colleges,” will explore the perceptions of community college presidents in rural Oklahoma institutions as to their roles, previous experience, and involvement in fundraising. Obtaining a greater understanding of the essential factors for practice in fundraising may provide a foundational framework for community college presidents to follow as they establish possible solutions for the financial challenges they face.

The specific criteria associated with this qualitative multiple case study identified you for inclusion in the research. I know that your schedule is extremely busy, and additional time commitments are difficult; however, I am asking for your participation in the study to further research in this important area for the current and future leaders of rural community colleges. My study will include a one-time site visit for an interview that will last approximately forty-five minutes. It is my desire to complete all site visits as soon as possible.

Please contact me at: 918-775-1170 or jdfalkne@uark.edu if any further information is needed. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you for your cooperation and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jay Falkner
Higher Education Doctoral Student
University of Arkansas

APPENDIX B
Informed Consent Form
Presidential Fundraising:
A Multiple Case Study of Rural Oklahoma Community Colleges
Higher Education, College of Education and Health Professions
University of Arkansas

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

This is an invitation to participate in a research study focused on the fundraising role of community college presidents serving rural student populations. Your position as a current community college president in Oklahoma qualifies you as a potential participant.

RESEARCH STUDY FACTS

Who is the Principal Researcher?

Jay Falkner
918-775-1170 cell
jdfalkne@uark.edu

Who is the Faculty Advisor?

Dr. John Murry, Jr.
(479) 575-3082 (office)
jmurry@uark.edu

What is the purpose of this research study?

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore, understand, and describe the perceptions of community college presidents in rural Oklahoma institutions as to their roles, previous experience, and involvement in fund raising. Obtaining a greater understanding of the essential factors for practice in fundraising may provide a foundational framework for community college presidents to follow as they establish possible solutions for the financial challenges they face.

Who will participate in the study?

The anticipated number of participants for this qualitative multiple case study will be 8. The study will focus on rural serving community college presidents in the state of Oklahoma.

What am I being asked to do?

Your participation will include a one-time site visit for an audio-recorded interview, lasting approximately 45 minutes, with field notes made based on your responses to ten scripted questions, with additional prompts.

What are the possible risks or discomforts of the study?

There are no risks or discomforts anticipated for participants in this study.

What are the possible benefits of the study?

Your participation in the study could help to further research in this important area for the current and future leaders of rural community colleges.

How long will the study last?

The study will be conducted over a period of one to two months; however, your involvement will be limited to the one-time 45-minute interview. At the conclusion of the interview process, you will have the opportunity to review the interview transcript if you wish to do so to ensure information accuracy.

Will I receive compensation for my time and inconvenience if I choose to participate in the study?

There is no monetary compensation for participation in the study.

Will I have to pay for anything associated with the study?

There are no costs for your participation.

What are the options if I do not want to be in the study?

You may choose to decline participation or withdraw at any time with no associated consequences.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

Participation information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable state and federal law. Information will be recorded anonymously by the Principal Investigator (Jason “Jay” Falkner), and will be handled and stored securely. Pseudonyms will be assigned to participants before written and oral reports are prepared so links cannot be established to involved individuals. All study documents will be kept in a locked, secure space.

Will I know the results of the study?

You may request feedback results at the conclusion of the study by contacting the faculty advisor, Dr. John Murry, Jr. at jmurry@uark.edu, or the Principal Researcher, Jay Falkner, at jdfalkne@uark.edu.

What do I do if I have questions about the research study?

You have the right to contact the Principal Researcher or Faculty Advisor if you have any concerns or need additional information. You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Compliance Office listed below if you have concerns about your right as a participant:

Ro Windwalker, CIP
Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Compliance
University of Arkansas
109 MLKG Building
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201
479-575-2208
irb@uark.edu

I have read the statement above and have had the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns. I understand the purpose of the study, potential benefits, and possible risks that are involved. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that findings developed from this research will be shared with the participants. Finally, I understand that no rights have been waived from the signing of consent.

Participant Signature

Date

APPENDIX C
Participant Profile
Demographic Questionnaire

YEARS IN CURRENT PRESIDENTIAL POSITION

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16+

POSITION HELD PRIOR TO PRESIDENCY: _____

PROFESSIONAL YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16+

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Indicate highest earned degree:

- Master's
- PhD or EdD
- Professional Degree
- Other: _____

FIELD OF STUDY: _____

PERCENTAGE OF TIME PER WEEK SPENT FUNDRAISING

- 0-10
- 10-20
- 20-30
- 30-40
- 40-50
- 50+

APPENDIX D
Interview Guide
Presidential Fundraising:
A Multiple Case Study of Rural Oklahoma Community Colleges
Principal Researcher: Jason “Jay” Falkner
Faculty Advisor: Dr. John W. Murry, Jr.

Participant Identification: _____

Interview Date: _____

Interview Time: _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY OF RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS IN OKLAHOMA.

PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT THE INFORMED CONSENT FORM YOU ARE SIGNING AND AGREEING TO WILL ENSURE THAT ALL INFORMATION COLLECTED WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL TO THE EXTENT ALLOWED BY LAW AND UNIVERSITY POLICY, AND PARTICIPANT’S IDENTITY WILL NOT BE LINKED DIRECTLY AND/OR INDIRECTLY WITH THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY EVEN THOUGH THIS INTERVIEW WILL BE RECORDED AND FIELD NOTES WILL BE COLLECTED THROUGHOUT THE DURATION.

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT YOUR PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY AND YOU MAY WITHDRAW AT ANY TIME.

DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS BEFORE WE BEGIN?

DO I HAVE PERMISSION TO BEGIN?

THE SERIES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WILL RELATE TO YOUR ROLE AS A RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT IN OKLAHOMA, SPECIFICALLY IN THE AREA OF FUNDRAISING.

Should you have questions or concerns about the survey, please contact Jason “Jay” Falkner at: 918-775-1170, jdfalkne@uark.edu.

1. Would you please describe your career path and how you ascended to your current presidency?

2. How has the community college presidency changed during your tenure?

3. In terms of fundraising responsibilities, how prepared were you when you entered the presidency?
4. What are your greatest challenges as a rural community college president in Oklahoma?
5. What are the essential/primary presidential roles in rural community college fundraising?
6. What presidential characteristics are necessary for effective fundraising?
7. How have your past fundraising experiences impacted the fundraising efforts at your current institution?
8. How have the multiple pressures of fundraising affected presidential performance?
9. What fundraising accomplishment are you most proud of during your tenure as president?
10. What is the single most pressing issue facing future rural community college presidents in Oklahoma?

APPENDIX E
Participant Letter of Appreciation

October --, 2017

President (PARTICIPANT NAME):

Thank you for your recent participation in my qualitative dissertation study concerning the evolving roles of community college presidents. I know that your precious time is limited due to the overwhelming job responsibilities you carry, so your willingness to share your knowledge and expertise is greatly appreciated. I enjoyed our interview time and intend to carry the benefits associated with our research forward to provide greater opportunities for current and future leaders in our field.

Sincerely,

Jay Falkner

APPENDIX F
Member Checking Correspondence

From: Jay Falkner
Sent: October --, 2017
To: (PARTICIPANT NAME)
Subject: Interview Transcript

President (PARTICIPANT NAME):

Thank you for allowing me to interview you for my qualitative dissertation study through the University of Arkansas. Your thoughtful participation in the study will provide a wealth of knowledge for current and future leaders in community colleges. Obtaining a greater understanding of the essential factors for practice in fundraising may provide a foundational framework for community college presidents to follow as they establish possible solutions for the financial challenges they face.

I have attached a written transcript of our recent interview for your review and consideration pertaining to information accuracy. Please review the transcript and let me know if any changes are necessary. Key identifiers will be protected through confidential means including redaction and the use of pseudonyms.

All feedback needs to be provided by Monday, October 30, 2017. If I haven't received a response from you by that time, I will assume no corrections are necessary. Thanks again for your participation in this research study. I look forward to sharing my results with you soon.

Sincerely,

Jay Falkner

APPENDIX G

Institutional Review Board Protocol



To: Jason Daniel Falkner
From: Douglas James Adams, Chair
IRB Committee
Date: 10/18/2017
Action: **Exemption Granted**
Action Date: 10/18/2017
Protocol #: 1710077008
Study Title: Presidential Fundraising: A Multiple Case Study of Rural Oklahoma Community Colleges

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt after review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval or exemption from the collaborating institution's IRB.

Adverse Events: Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

Amendments: Any changes to the protocol that impact human subjects, including changes in experimental design, equipment, personnel or funding, must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.