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Oklahoma Public Comprehensive Universities:
The President's Role in Financial Management and Fundraising

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

Oklahoma public comprehensive university presidents face many challenges. Among the top challenges is the quest for adequate funding of their institutions, including adequate levels of support from state resources. For Oklahoma's public comprehensive universities and their leaders, the low levels of public support by the state have become a pattern, rather than an anomaly. The statewide reductions in appropriations for higher education funding have had a disproportionate effect on Oklahoma's public comprehensive universities because they have fewer diversified revenue sources. As a result, Oklahoma public comprehensive university presidents have been forced to become more adept at budgeting, financial management, fundraising, and finding the resources necessary for their institutions to not only be successful, but to simply survive.

The study utilized a transcendental phenomenological research approach. A qualitative research methodology was used to explore the phenomena in a systematic manner. There were seven interview participants who were presidents of public comprehensive universities in the mid-western state of Oklahoma. A structured interview protocol that included open-ended interview questions was used to collect relevant data from interview participants regarding their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

Study findings identified eight themes that described the roles of Oklahoma public comprehensive university presidents in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. The findings illustrated that Oklahoma public comprehensive university presidents spend most of their time on budgeting and financial management, followed closely by fundraising. The study concluded that while they spend most of their time on these areas, few have a background in

financial management and fundraising, and most of their experience in these areas was acquired in their previous role prior to becoming president or while on the job.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation and research to the loving memory of my father, Dennis Dee Shields. You were my champion, cheerleader, guiding light, mentor, role model, and the best father a son could ever hope to have in his life. You were always there when I needed you. The motivation and perseverance you instilled in me to succeed came from watching you work tirelessly to become successful and provide me with this opportunity. I will never forget what you have done for me, and I will always be grateful for the time we spent together. Without your love and support, this journey would not have been possible for me. I was always so proud of you and what you accomplished. I hope you are proud of me and what I have accomplished. I miss you every day. There is not a day that goes by that I don't think about you. I know that you are with me, but I would give anything for you to see what we have accomplished. You always said, "One of these days we will have a doctor in the family." Now we do, Dr. Mark Bradley Shields. Dad, we did it!

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Table of Contents

Chapter I. Introduction	1
A. Statement of the Problem	4
B. Purpose of the Study	6
C. Research Questions	6
D. Definition of Key Terms	7
E. Assumptions of the Study	9
F. Delimitations and Limitations of the Study	10
G. Significance of the Study	10
H. Conceptual Framework of the Study	12
Chapter II. Review of Related Literature	14
A. Defining the American Public Comprehensive University	15
B. Defining Oklahoma Public Comprehensive Universities	19
C. The History of the American Public Comprehensive University	21
D. The History of Oklahoma's Public Comprehensive Universities	24
E. The Mission and Purpose of Public Comprehensive Universities	26
F. The American Public Comprehensive University President	29
G. Chapter Summary	46
Chapter III. Research Methods	47
A. Research Design of the Study	48
B. Sample for the Study	50
C. Case Study Institutions: Role and Mission	53
D. Research Approach	62

E. Role of the Researcher	63
F. Collection of Data	64
G. Data Analysis	66
H. Chapter Summary	69
Chapter IV. Findings	70
A. Summary of the Study	71
B. Data Collection Results from the Questionnaire	74
C. Data Analysis	80
D. Chapter Summary	111
Chapter V. Conclusions, Recommendations, and Discussion	113
A. Summary of the Study	113
B. Conclusions	115
C. Recommendations for Research	118
D. Discussion	121
References	129
Appendices	136
APPENDIX A: Interview Protocol	136
APPENDIX B: IRB Approval Confirmation	142
APPENDIX C: Request to Participate Email	143
APPENDIX D: Informed Consent Form	144

Chapter I. Introduction

Oklahoma Public Comprehensive Universities (OPCUs) and their president's face many challenges. Among the top challenges facing these institutions and their leaders is the quest for adequate funding of their institutions, including adequate levels of support from state resources (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2017). Over the last decade, Oklahoma's public higher education system has found itself in an increasingly difficult situation as business and political leaders have demanded more from colleges and universities at a time when state funding has declined to its lowest level in nearly 20 years (Krehbiel, 2017). Over the past two decades, a dramatically shrinking share of the higher education budget has come from the state (Fine, 2019). In 1988, 74.2% of the budget for higher education was state appropriated dollars, but in 2019, just 27.2% of the budget came from state funding (Fine, 2019).

To put this continuous pattern of higher education funding by the state into perspective, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) approved an allocation of \$770 million for fiscal year 2021 (Korth, 2020). Before the turn of the 21st century, during the 1999-2000 fiscal year, the system received \$739 million in appropriations from the state, and in 2001, two decades ago, the system received \$814 million (Korth, 2020). As a result, Oklahoma's public higher education system has been faced with the task of doing more with less in an environment in which state budget cuts have placed Oklahoma's higher education funding back into 20th century levels (Korth, 2020; Krehbiel, 2017). For OPCUs and their leaders, the low levels of public support by the state have become a pattern, rather than an anomaly.

Since the Great Recession of 2008, Oklahoma has consistently lagged behind other states when it comes to higher education funding (Korth, 2020). According to the Urban Institute-Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center, Oklahoma ranked 46th in the nation in total state and local spending per person in 2013 (Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2021c). The combined annual state and local government spending in Oklahoma was \$8,373 per person for fiscal year 2013, which was 17.2% below the national average of \$10,116 (Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2021c). The state's per person spending in 2013, was 8% less than the average of neighboring states (Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2021c). Oklahoma spent 30% of the state's total government spending that year on education, but this was about 10% less than the average of other states (Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2021c).

Between 2013 and 2017, state funding in Oklahoma for education as a whole decreased by 9% (Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2021c). In 2017, in terms of expenditures related to Oklahoma's state budget, the largest share of state spending went to health and social services (39%) and education (21%) (Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2021c). That year, higher education was the third largest state agency by appropriation at \$810 million, which was 16% below the prior year (Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2021b). In fact, agency appropriations fell by 20% over the previous six years, and the overall state budget was nearly identical in fiscal year 2011, and in fiscal year 2017 (Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2021b). When adjusted for inflation, the fiscal year 2017 budget, was 15% less than the budget for FY 2007 (Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2021b; Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2021a).

According to the Illinois State University's Grapevine project (Packham, 2017), Oklahoma was the lowest-ranked in state appropriations for higher education from 2012 to 2017. The Grapevine study found that cuts in state funding during that period had earned Oklahoma the distinction of being last in the nation when it comes to state tax-based support for higher education (McNutt, 2017). The Grapevine study found that between fiscal year 2012-2017, state appropriations for education decreased from \$1,042,529,350 to \$857,022,108, amounting to a 17.8% decrease (Harkins, 2017). Likewise, state support for Oklahoma's higher education system was \$995 million in fiscal year 2012, but by fiscal year 2017, it had dropped to \$810 million (McNutt, 2017).

The results from the Illinois State University's Grapevine project (Packham, 2017), have shown that since the Great Recession of 2008, Oklahoma has consistently lagged behind the country when it comes to higher education funding. The Grapevine survey results also show that most states reported a five-year increase in state support for higher education between 2012 and 2017, ranging from 2.1% to 51.4% (McNutt, 2017). The survey results also show that seven states reported five-year declines ranging from 1.8% (Arkansas and Kansas) to 17.8 % (Oklahoma) (McNutt, 2017). The appropriation for higher education funding in Oklahoma during the 2018 fiscal year, was \$36 million lower than in fiscal year 2017, resulting in fewer dollars being allocated to each of Oklahoma's 25 public colleges and universities (McNutt, 2017), and these reductions have had a disproportionate effect on OPCUs, because they have fewer diversified revenue sources (Halter, 2019).

A. Statement of the Problem

According to Glen Johnson, Chancellor of OSRHE, “Increasing college degree-completion to address Oklahoma’s current and future workforce needs remains a top priority for the state system of higher education” (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021d, p. 1). However, the reality of achieving this goal is unlikely for a variety of reasons. Nearly half of Oklahoma’s university students attend public comprehensive universities (PCUs) and sustained budget cuts to higher education since the Great Recession of 2008, have had a disproportionate impact on the state’s 10 PCUs and the students they serve (Halter, 2019). The cumulative result of these cuts has been higher student costs, fewer courses being offered, and smaller full-time faculties and staff, as well as a strain on maintenance and upkeep of facilities (Krehbiel, 2017). Therefore, increasing college degree-completion is unlikely because these factors work against OSRHEs degree-completion initiative.

Johnson, a former legislator and college president, indicated that systemwide, Oklahoma’s public colleges and universities have 2,000 fewer faculty and staff positions than in 2015 and offer 1,800 fewer course sections of classes, leading to reduced institutional revenues from decreasing enrollment (Krehbiel, 2017). Due to the continuous pattern of budget cuts to higher education, Oklahoma’s colleges and universities have been forced to make up those cuts by cutting programs and increasing tuition; while also reducing the number of faculty and staff (Harkins, 2017). All of these measures appear to work against the degree-completion initiative established by the Task Force on the Future of Higher Education that was established by OSHRE to improve degree completion and increase productivity by focusing on modernization, efficiencies, and innovations (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2017).

Statewide funding issues in Oklahoma have had a unique impact on PCUs for several reasons, including the lack of large endowments (Halter, 2019). Baum, a higher education researcher at the Urban Institute in Washington D.C., concurred with this argument, noting,

One piece of it is endowments, but also the flagship universities are much more likely to have the possibility of attracting students from out of state or international students who pay higher tuition which can compensate to some extent for the loss of state funding.

(Halter, 2019, p. 1).

As a result, OPCU presidents have been forced to become more adept at budgeting, financial management, fundraising, and finding the resources necessary for their institutions to not only be successful, but to simply survive. The American Council on Education's (ACE, 2017) edition of the American College President Study (ACPS) found that in terms of use of time, PCU presidents cited spending the most time on budgeting and financial management, followed closely by fundraising. Therefore, PCU presidents across the nation are looking to private gifts, grants, contracts, tuition/fees, and endowments as a means to diversify their funding bases (Cottom, 2017).

In a study conducted by Deloitte's Center for Higher Education Excellence and Georgia Tech's Center for 21st Century Universities, Selingo et al. (2017) ranked six skills that presidents needed to possess when they assumed office; among them were financial management and fundraising. According to the ACPS (2017), budgeting, financial management, and fundraising are the areas in which PCU presidents spend most of their time, but conversely, these are the areas in which they typically feel most unprepared (American Council on Education, 2017).

B. Purpose of the Study

The purpose for conducting the study was to describe and examine the perceptions of Oklahoma public comprehensive university presidents about their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. The focus on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising stems from rising concerns about revenue stability within the state and future forecasts that suggest additional and more challenging financial times based on decades of declining state budgets. The rationale for focusing on OPCU presidents was based on the essential role that college presidents play in providing the necessary leadership for an institution to survive and thrive. These leadership positions are critical to the future of their institutions, and understanding their relationship with financial management and fundraising leadership skills will provide critical information to help assure these institutions have a bright future.

C. Research Questions

1. How do OPCU presidents describe their professional role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?
2. What personal and professional characteristics do OPCU presidents describe or perceive as necessary for effectiveness in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?
3. How do OPCU presidents describe their prior experience with budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?
4. How do OPCU presidents perceive their previous experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising has contributed to their current and future success in these areas?
5. How much of their time do OPCU presidents perceive they spend on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?

D. Definition of Key Terms

Board of Trustees – Langston University: On January 1, 2009, by order of House Bill No. 2882, the Board of Trustees for Langston University-Oklahoma City and Langston University-Tulsa was created. The committee consists of seven members appointed by the Governor and two members of the Board of Regents for the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges, or their designees, selected by the chair of the Board of Regents, who shall serve as voting, ex-officio members. The board has a comprehensive advisory role in all aspects of the operations of Langston and it advises the President of Langston University and the Board of Regents on the supervision and management of Langston University's two urban campuses and performs other functions as necessary (Langston University, 2021a).

Oklahoma Public Comprehensive Universities: Currently in the state of Oklahoma there are 10 PCUs, including Cameron University (CU), East Central University (ECU), Langston University (LU), Northeastern State University (NSU), Northwestern Oklahoma State University (NWOSU), Oklahoma Panhandle State University (OPSU), Rogers State University (RSU), Southeastern Oklahoma State University (SEOSU), Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU), and University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021a).

Oklahoma State Board of Regents: The governing boards that assume responsibility for the operation of the institutions, including determining management policy, employing personnel, fixing their salaries and assigning their duties, contracting for other services needed, having custody for other services needed, having custody of records, and acquiring and holding title to property. Among specific areas of administrative control for which the governing board assumes responsibility in operating the institution includes general academic policy and

administration, student life, budget administration, planning and construction of buildings, purchasing, auxiliary activities, budgeting and administration, issuance of revenue bonds, and administration of self-liquidating properties. The governing board, through its chief executive officer, the president of the institution, makes recommendations to the coordinating board, the State Regents, regarding the institutions' functions and programs of study, standards of education, and the budgetary needs of the institution for both general operations and for capital improvement (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021a).

Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education: The Regents shall constitute a coordinating board of control for all State institutions described in Section 1 hereof, with the following specific powers: (1) it shall prescribe standards of higher education applicable to each institution; (2) it shall determine the functions and courses of study in each of the institutions to conform to the standards prescribed; (3) it shall grant degrees and other forms of academic recognition for completion of the prescribed courses in all of such institutions; (4) it shall recommend to the State Legislature the budget allocations to each institution; and (5) it shall have the power to recommend to the Legislature proposed fees for all of such institutions, and any such fees shall be effective only within the limits prescribed by the Legislature (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021a).

Institutional Governing Boards: There are currently three constitutional governing boards and 12 statutory boards in the State of Oklahoma. The constitutional boards are the Board of Regents for the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges, the Regional University System of Oklahoma, and the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021a).

Regional University System of Oklahoma: One of the three constitutional governing boards for public higher education in Oklahoma. The board has oversight for six state universities, including East Central University, Northeastern State University, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Southwestern Oklahoma State University, and the University of Central Oklahoma. The mission of this collection of institutions and their governing boards is to provide higher education access and programs for Oklahoma citizens through specific service areas (Regional University System of Oklahoma, 2021).

The University of Oklahoma Board of Regents: The governing body of the University of Oklahoma, Cameron University, and Rogers State University. The board is composed of seven citizens appointed by the Governor with approval of the State Senate. Each Regent serves a seven-year term (University of Oklahoma, 2021).

E. Assumptions of the Study

The study accepted the following assumptions. First, examining the roles of OPCU presidents in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising through case studies and interviews can enhance the understanding of how they perceive their fiscal leadership roles. Second, the study accepted the assumption that those interviewed were truthful, honest, and complete in their responses when discussing those fiscal challenges as this study relied upon their honest assessment in the interviews. Third, the study accepted the assumption that PCUs have a unique set of characteristics, responsibilities, and strategies that fundamentally differ from research universities and community colleges in Oklahoma.

F. Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The study was limited in that only one set of college presidents, those working at public comprehensive universities in the mid-western state of Oklahoma, were included in the data collection. Therefore, findings to other states and types of institutions should be made with caution and with acknowledgement of this limitation.

The study was limited in that interview data was collected on a potentially politically sensitive topic, state appropriations and how a state legislature decided to allocate funding. As a result, this political sensitivity should be considered when interpreting findings.

The study was limited in that the problem and data collection were occurring at a time in history when the state government was attempting to fund a wide variety of different programs, projects, and priorities. Therefore, the problem, in addition to study findings, should recognize and make note of the time in history that the study took place.

Finally, the study was limited in that it only focused on one mid-western state. The state has historically had a conservative orientation resulting in a belief in low-taxation, limiting revenue collection. Therefore, generalizations to other states should recognize that the unique attributes of Oklahoma may not translate to other state political contexts in the same way.

G. Significance of the Study

This research was an exploratory study that examined the president's role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising at Oklahoma's 10 PCUs. These institutions have been forced to address and adopt new, different, and critical business models to increase cash flow and limit expenditures (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2017). The pattern of declining state appropriations for higher education in Oklahoma has created an environment in which OPCU presidents struggle to balance their budgets while providing a quality education for

their students. To address those challenges, OPCU presidents, like their community college counterparts have increasingly been forced to become more aggressive, creative, and involved in resource development through fundraising (Falkner, 2017) because they are spending an increasing amount of their time on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising issues (American Council on Education, 2017).

A combination of economic effects has led to a pattern of limited funding for OPCUs (Halter, 2019; Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2021d). This has caused OPCU presidents to prioritize their roles and time in the areas of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. This is problematic because according to the ACPS (2017), in terms of use of time, OPCU presidents cited spending most of their time on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising (American Council on Education, 2017). In addition, the study found that budgeting, financial management, and fundraising were the areas in which they typically feel most unprepared.

Another issue was that many trustees feel that they do not understand higher education finances well enough to help their institutions address budgetary challenges despite the fact that many PCU trustees have careers in business, banking, and law (Public Agenda, 2015). This is problematic because if a banker, a business CEO, and a lawyer are unable to understand higher education finances, it is unreasonable for boards to expect PCU presidents to be well versed in those areas. Although unreasonable as it may be, this is the dilemma currently facing OPCU presidents.

The current study focused on OPCU presidents because aspiring OPCU presidents need to understand the challenges and experiences facing current and future OPCU presidents. In addition, this research provided valuable information on financial management and leadership that could be used to provide training opportunities for OPCU presidents, trustees, and the OSRHE. Furthermore, this research provided valuable information to Oklahoma's Legislators regarding fiscal decision-making with respect to Oklahoma's higher education institutions.

H. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Currently, there have been a limited number of studies developed regarding the role of the president in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising at PCUs. In particular, specific theories do not exist regarding the president's role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising (Satterwhite, 2004). As a result, to date, limited information and research on the president's role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising at OPCUs exists. Therefore, this study explored the president's leadership role in the areas of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising because most PCU presidents do not come from a background in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, and many have little to no training in those areas, even with newly expanded responsibilities and expectations (Hartley & Godin, 2009; Nesbit et al., 2006).

Since no definite theories exist on this topic, the current study used both descriptive and exploratory methodologies in its design. The conceptual framework of this study was based on the ACPS's 2017 premise that demonstrated the need to differentiate the role and needs of university presidents at specific types of institutions, including PCUs (Jackson, 2013).

According to Fryar (2015), there are roughly 400 PCUs scattered across the U.S., and those institutions enroll nearly 70% of all undergraduate four-year students at public institutions. Despite this fact, they remain one of the least understood sectors of higher education in the U.S. Nevertheless, there have been numerous scholarly contributions to understanding PCUs on which this exploratory study builds. According to Orphan (2018), the literature on PCUs consists of five groups: (1) historical studies, (2) introductory and classificatory studies, (3) backdrop studies, (4) faculty experience studies, and (5) striving for prestige studies. This study adds to the literature base by proposing that the literature on PCUs actually consists of six groups, and that sixth group, is leadership studies.

The rationale for researching PCUs and their presidents was based on the notion that the portrait of the average president masks important differences among leaders of higher education that are reflected by the type of institution they serve (American Council on Education, 2017). Institutions vary in size, they have unique missions and purposes, and their presidents are often selected because they embody the values of, and are prepared to meet the challenges associated with, a particular type of institution (American Council on Education, 2017). As a result, presidents spend most of their careers learning about the unique opportunities and challenges facing specific kinds of institutions, because they tend to come from the ranks of their own or similar institutions, which is the reason why it is important to profile presidents based on the unique traits of the institutions they lead (American Council on Education, 2017).

Chapter II. Review of Related Literature

Public comprehensive universities (PCUs) are one of the least understood sectors of higher education in the United States. This is because most scholarly research in higher education has focused on community colleges, research universities, and selective liberal arts institutions (Kirst et al., 2010). Fryar (2015) argued that with the focus on community colleges and elite institutions, researchers and policymakers tend to pass over the colleges in the middle: America's comprehensive universities. For this reason, comprehensive universities have historically been an understudied segment of the U.S. higher education landscape (Grubb & Lazerson, 2005). As a result, Soo (2011), found the literature on this sector of American higher education to be relatively sparse and defining this sector was difficult. Likewise, Schneider and Deane (2015), stated, "comprehensive universities are not easy to define, and the distinctions between them and other types of institutions can be hazy" (p. 2).

Literature for the current study was gathered from the Northeastern State University library database in consultation with Dr. Pamela Louderback, Director of the Northeastern State University Broken Arrow campus library, as well as 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 EBSCO host Academic Libraries databases. Likewise, all searches were conducted by using the following parameters: search terms related to college presidency, public comprehensive university and/or public regional university, duties and/or roles of college president, financial management, and fundraising; scholarly peer-reviewed resources; and publication periods between 1999 and 2021.

The literature was reviewed and synthesized to detect consistent themes and discrepancies in the literature. The results provided the foundation for examining the role and use of time spent by OPCU presidents in the areas of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. The following terms were used to search for peer-reviewed articles, books, reports, and other literature sources: presidential duties and/or roles in financial management, presidential duties and/or roles in fundraising, financial management at public comprehensive universities and/or public regional universities, fundraising at public comprehensive universities and/or public regional universities, presidential uses of time, and challenges facing public regional universities and/or public comprehensive university presidents. Citations and references from the initial searches provided a valuable source of foundational literature for the current study.

The following sections were identified for inclusion in the literature review: Defining the American PCU, Defining Oklahoma's PCUs, A Brief Review of the History of the American PCU, A Brief History of Oklahoma's PCUs, The Mission and Purpose of PCUs, The Mission and Purpose of Oklahoma's PCUs and The Role of PCU Presidents in Budgeting, Financial Management, and Fundraising.

A. Defining the American Public Comprehensive University

Many researchers have tried to define and explain these institutions by searching for characteristics that conclusively identify comprehensives, such as degree offerings, patterns of student enrollment, and proximity to population centers; however, those researchers quickly discovered that there was no natural break along which to conclusively identify comprehensives (Fryar, 2015). Because those institutions operate on a complex continuum, it was difficult to develop definitions that encompassed a stable set of institutions over time, which Fryar (2015)

argued contributed to the lack of formal dialogue in both academia and among policymakers about their role and value.

Henderson (2007) referred to this diverse group of institutions as being state controlled or funded with a purpose that was broad or comprehensive, not single-purpose, such as teacher training or focusing extensively on doctoral degrees. Schneider and Deane (2015) defined comprehensive universities as institutions for higher learning with teaching and research facilities, typically including a graduate school, and professional schools that award master's degrees and doctorates, and an undergraduate division that awards bachelor's degrees. Miller and Skinner (2012) described PCUs as a broad group of institutions that have historically received significant funding from state tax dollars, are under some level of public control, and have traditionally been oriented more toward teaching than research. They also tend to draw students from their backyard or adjacent areas. Maxim and Muro (2020) defined PCUs as public, four-year, bachelor's-degree-offering schools that are not primarily research-focused, and offer a comprehensive set of degree offerings without a specialized focus in a single field or single set of related fields.

Although defining and explaining the comprehensive universities was a difficult task it was also a necessary part of this research. For the purpose of this research, and the need to establish boundaries on how PCUs are defined, only those institutions in the 50 states that were public, degree-granting postsecondary institutions that currently award a bachelor's degree were considered as PCUs. This research followed the logic and methodology of Fryar (2015) to define and describe PCUs. This methodology consisted of three common ways of differentiating between the comprehensives and their counterpart institutions. The three common ways were Carnegie classification, the awarding of graduate degrees, and flagship status (Fryar 2015).

Fryar (2015) utilized these three common ways of differentiating between the comprehensives and their counterpart institutions to construct two definitions of which institutions count as PCUs.

The historical definition categorized comprehensives as bachelor's-degree-granting, public four-year universities that do not fall into any of the following categories: primary research university in the state; land-grant universities with long histories of research and graduate education; or institutions that, when founded, were created or elevated expressly to serve as a research institution (Fryar, 2015). According to Fryar's 2015 research, the final tally under the historical definition is 473 comprehensives. The contemporary definition used the Carnegie classifications of all public four-year universities that fell under the categories of Master's Colleges and Universities (smaller, medium, and large), Baccalaureate Colleges – Arts and Sciences, and Baccalaureate Colleges – Diverse Fields with a final tally of 384 comprehensives (Fryar, 2015). For the purpose of this research, PCUs were described based on their American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) membership and Carnegie Classification, which consisted of approximately 400 PCUs (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2020b; Carnegie Foundation, 2020).

The categorization, classification, and nomenclature of PCUs made these institutions difficult to study. In fact, Miller and Skinner (2012) found the study of PCUs to be complicated because they defied easy categorization and their nomenclature was problematic. In terms of their categorization, the role of each comprehensive institution was distinct but overlapped with other sectors of the system, including research universities, community colleges, and liberal arts institutions (Soo, 2011). This overlap contributed to the complexity of their categorization.

Due to the comprehensive nature of their mission and purpose, PCUs conduct research like major research universities, although generally a larger proportion of it is applied and locally focused and grant funded (Soo, 2011). PCUs and community colleges are similar in that they provide an access point to higher education for different groups, including the underprepared, nontraditional age students, and working students (Soo, 2011). PCUs and liberal arts are similar in that the main mission of both institutions is granting bachelor's degrees (Soo, 2011).

In terms of their classification, PCUs occupy a middle ground between two-year community colleges and the more prominent flagship research universities (Public Agenda, 2015). PCUs offer a wide array of degree areas and can be found within Carnegie Classifications of baccalaureate colleges, master's universities, and even among doctoral universities that primarily grant professional doctorates (Soo, 2011). PCUs generally grant a large number of both bachelor's and master's degrees in a wide variety of subject areas and are increasingly offering doctorates in professionally oriented disciplines (Soo, 2011). Research conducted by Public Agenda (2015) revealed that some PCUs focused exclusively on undergraduate education, while others offered master's degrees or even a few doctorates. This research also noted that a significant amount of PCUs were historically black colleges and universities or other minority-serving institutions (Public Agenda, 2015).

Another issue that makes PCUs a difficult sector of higher education to study was their nomenclature. The following are a few of the labels that have been attached to PCUs: branch campuses, commuter schools, compass schools, public master's universities, regional comprehensive universities, second tier institutions, state colleges and universities, the backbone of the American higher education system, the workhorse of American higher education, the undistinguished middle child, and the university next door (American Association of State

Colleges and Universities, 2020b; Fryar, 2015; Grubb & Lazerson, 2005; Henderson, 2007; Orphan, 2018; Public Agenda, 2015; Titus, Vamosiu, & McClure, 2016). Given the various nomenclature associated with these institutions, this research used the label of public comprehensive university or PCU when discussing these institutions whenever possible.

Geographic location, size, and scope of PCUs were other factors that made them a difficult sector of higher education to study. PCUs are located in every U.S. state except Wyoming; they serve urban, suburban, and rural communities; they exist in older downtown cores, in remote small towns, and in suburbs and exurbs along interstate highways (Fryar, 2015; Miller & Skinner, 2012; Public Agenda, 2015). Some comprehensive universities are very large, serving 40,000 students, while others serve as few as 1,000 students, and most of their students are from the region, residing within one to three hours of campus (Miller & Skinner, 2012; Public Agenda, 2015). Although geographic location was a factor that made these institutions a difficult sector of higher education to study, geography was also a crucial part of these institutions; it was intimately woven into their mission and purpose. Thus, community engagement and regional stewardship were especially important for PCUs (Public Agenda, 2015). Serving the needs of the city and region in which PCUs reside was a very important role for those institution's as they sought to tailor the output of their graduates to the needs of the region (Soo, 2011).

B. Defining Oklahoma's Public Comprehensive Universities

As previously noted, defining and explaining the comprehensives was a difficult task; however, for the purpose of this research, it was necessary to define the institutions in the state of Oklahoma that were considered to be PCUs. For the purpose of the study, only institutions that the OSHRE designated as PCUs were included.

The Oklahoma State system of higher education, created in 1941 by a vote of the people, amended the state's constitution to provide for such a system (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021e). The state system was comprised of 25 colleges and universities, including two research universities, 10 PCUs, one public liberal arts university, and 12 community colleges, along with 11 constituent agencies and two university centers (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021e).

The State Board of Regents was the coordinating board of control for all institutions in the state system of higher education; governing boards of regents and boards of trustees were responsible for the operation and management of each state system of higher education program (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021e). Therefore, OSRHE was the state's legal structure for providing public education at the collegiate level, and each institution was governed by a board of regents (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021e). Currently, in the state of Oklahoma, there are 10 PCUs that fall under the control of OSRHE, and there are currently three constitutional governing boards that are responsible for governing those institutions (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021e).

In the state of Oklahoma there were 10 PCUs, including Cameron University (CU), East Central University (ECU), Langston University (LU), Northeastern State University (NSU), Northwestern Oklahoma State University (NWOSU), Oklahoma Panhandle State University (OPSU), Rogers State University (RSU), Southeastern Oklahoma State University (SEOSU), Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU), and University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021c).

Each one of Oklahoma's 10 PCUs is governed by one of the following constitutional governing boards: The Board of Regents for the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges, the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO), and the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021c). For example, LU and OPSU are governed by the Board of Regents for the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021c). ECU, NSU, NWOSU, SEOSU, SWOSU, and UCO are governed by RUSO (RUSO, 2021). CU and RSU are governed by the Regents of the University of Oklahoma (University of Oklahoma, 2021).

C. The History of the American Public Comprehensive University

The collective histories, missions, and purposes of PCUs were remarkably similar given the number of and diversity among these institutions. The fact that those institutions shared similar histories, missions, and purposes has contributed to the lore of those institutions being undistinguishable from one another (Thelin, 2019). The purpose and mission of those institutions created academic environments in which they were viewed as being undistinguished because they often lacked the traditional trappings of prestige in U.S. postsecondary education, such as highly selective admissions criteria, immense infusions of federal research money, and nationally-competitive athletics programs (Brewer et al., 2002). Lacking the resources and storied histories of research institutions, comprehensives tend to be overshadowed by the prestige and status of the flagships (Fryar, 2015). Therefore, an issue that has persisted at PCUs throughout their histories has been the question of prestige and status (Soo, 2011).

The history, status, and prestige of PCUs have contributed to their lackluster reputation. For historical reasons, these institutions have tended to struggle with a kind of cult of personality because their attributes and configurations generally are not dissimilar to one another, primarily because in most cases they were never intended to be so when established (Miller & Skinner, 2012). The history of PCUs consisted of different pathways through which these institutions were formed. Fryar (2015) found that most comprehensives began as either normal schools, branch campuses of larger universities, community colleges, or some combination of the three. Finnegan (1991) found that most comprehensive colleges and universities were started as normal schools or teachers' colleges, though some also began as technical schools, schools sponsored by organizations such as the YMCA, or as private liberal arts colleges that became public and expanded their roles.

The origins of PCUs can be traced back to 1839, with the creation and development of the first public normal schools in Massachusetts (Ogren, 2015). The mission of those non-collegiate institutions was to educate common-school teachers based on the assumption that students needed to prepare in the basic subjects that they would teach (Thelin, 2019). The growing national demand for trained teachers due to the common-school movement of the 1830s led to the establishment of normal schools, which gradually spread throughout many of the states and territories of the United States throughout the second half of the nineteenth century (Finnegan, 1991).

From the very beginning those institutions struggled to attain status and prestige, due to their role as teacher training schools (Fryar, 2015). In the early 20th century, normal schools and the teaching profession at large were not highly regarded; however, compulsory attendance laws and an expansion of high schools contributed to a significant increase in school enrollment,

which inevitably increased the need for more teachers (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Eventually, harsh criticism pressured normal schools to abandon their role as demand for teachers with a bachelor's degree increased, leading more institutions to adopt four-year degree programs and change their identity from normal schools to more prestigious teachers' colleges (Fryar, 2015).

Consequently, after World War II and the passage of the GI Bill, college enrollment skyrocketed, leading to the change in institutional nomenclature, from normal school to teachers' colleges or colleges of education in some states, and finally to state colleges and universities, reflecting the shift in philosophy and curriculum of the institutions (Finnegan, 1991). The teachers' colleges of the 1920s-1960s were dedicated to a single purpose, to prepare public school teachers for the state, however their mission and purpose would evolve (Finnegan, 1991).

During the 1960s, state colleges began to broaden their offerings and this pattern continued into the 1980s due to the growing number of lower and middle-class baby boomers seeking access to higher education (Fryar, 2015). Whereas the elite universities could take some students by growing, the numbers were too great even for the research-oriented mega-universities to accommodate them, leading to the proliferation of the comprehensives (Henderson, 2009). Thus, state colleges slowly became multi-purpose institutions, offering both professional and liberal arts programs in a variety of applied and disciplinary fields and offering a comprehensive curriculum that included master's degrees (Finnegan, 1991).

As a result, normal schools often served as a starting point for the group that are now called the comprehensives for two reasons: (1) they were the largest set of institutions focused primarily on undergraduate education in the early part of the 20th century, and (2) they were the group that founded the AASCU, the organization that most often is identified as representing the interests of the comprehensive universities (Fryar, 2015). Thus, the relatively low status and

prestige of PCUs was a facet of their shared histories as normal schools, teachers' colleges, and state colleges and universities (Henderson, 2007).

Another aspect that contributed to the status of those institutions was the fact that the activities in which those institutions participated do not generate prestige by traditional measures; funded research, selective admissions policies, and major fundraising are simply not a part of the comprehensive institution's portfolio (Soo, 2011). With their slight research portfolios, open admissions policies, and absence of hallmarks assigned to flagships, such as multi-million-dollar athletics, housing, and sports facilities, PCUs struggle to keep up with the "Joneses." Despite their evolution, growth, and history, they all share a commitment to promoting educational access and the unique needs of their region (Maxim & Muro, 2020).

D. The History of Oklahoma's Public Comprehensive Universities

The history of Oklahoma's PCUs began when the first Oklahoma territorial legislature passed legislation creating three institutions of higher education in 1890 in order to fulfill a requirement of the Organic Act of Congress established by the territory (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021c). Congress required the territory to establish three types of public higher education: liberal arts and professional education, agriculture and mechanical arts education, to fulfill the land grant college provisions of the Morrill Act of 1862, and teacher training (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021c).

On Christmas Day 1890, Territorial Governor George Washington Steele signed the bill creating the Oklahoma Normal Schools for Teachers at Edmond to provide training for public school teachers in the new territory, today this institution is known as UCO (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021c).

In 1897, the territorial government established the Colored Agricultural and Normal University at Langston, known as LU; this institution was the only historically black college or university (HBCU) in the state of Oklahoma (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021c). This legislation also created the Normal School for Teachers at Alva, which is known today as NWOSU (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021c).

In 1901, the territorial government established the Normal School for Teachers at Weatherford, which is known today as SWOSU, and in 1908, a year after statehood, the first Oklahoma legislature created six secondary agricultural schools, in each of the five Supreme Court judicial districts and the sixth in the panhandle (Cameron University, 2021a; Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021c). As a result of this legislation, Cameron State School of Agriculture at Lawton, which is known today as CU, was established, along with Panhandle State School of Agriculture at Goodwell, which is known today as OPSU (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021c).

In 1909, the first Oklahoma Legislature created three normal schools in eastern Oklahoma to balance those operated in the west, and a preparatory school in the east to offset the one at Tonkawa (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021c). Those new institutions were Northeastern Normal School at Tahlequah, which is known today as NSU, East Central Normal School at Ada, which is known today as ECU, Southeastern Normal School at Durant, which is known today as SEOSU, and the Eastern Oklahoma University Preparatory School at Claremore, which is known today as RSU (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021c).

E. The Mission and Purpose of Public Comprehensive Universities

According to the AASCU (2020), there were nearly 400 college and university members in the United States. PCUs have similar missions and purposes because they share a learning-centered and teaching-centered culture, a historic commitment to underserved student populations, and a dedication to research and creativity that advances their regions' economic progress and community development (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2020b). An important aspect of their mission and purpose was to support innovation in teaching and learning through research and collaborative projects with the end goal of improving all students' educational and career outcomes (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2020b).

Since PCUs share a learning-centered and teaching-centered culture, they provide opportunities for undergraduates that may not exist at public research universities (PRUs) (Maxim & Muro, 2020). For this reason, Seltzer (2019) argued that the research of PCUs tends to engage undergraduates at a more significant level than PRUs because these institutions focused on experiential learning opportunities for undergraduates. Furthermore, Henderson (2009) found that PCUs have a student-centered mission, with faculty evaluated not just on the quality or impact of their research, but also on how well they teach and mentor students.

Due to their historic commitment to underserved student populations, PCUs provide access and social mobility to students who need it the most (McClure, 2018). One of the key values of the AASCU is increasing social and economic mobility by promoting accessible, affordable, and high-quality public higher education for students of all backgrounds, in particular those who are non-traditional, from lower-income families, or from underrepresented groups (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2020b). With their role in advancing

access and social mobility in higher education, PCUs have recently been labeled as institutions of opportunity (Orphan & McClure, 2018).

As institutions of opportunity, PCUs educate over 20% of undergraduate students in the U.S., including large shares of minoritized, veteran, adult, low-income, and first-generation students (Orphan & McClure, 2018). Soo (2011) noted that PCUs reduced inequities in education by providing access to a variety of groups who are underserved by PRUs, including non-traditional aged students, working students, and students requiring co-requisite or supplemental remediation, as well as nonacademic skill development. Immigrant students and students with children are also commonly served by PCUs (McClure, 2018). Therefore, PCUs award a greater share of their degrees to certain underrepresented groups than do PRUs (Maxim & Muro, 2020).

Compared to PRUs, PCUs award 2.4% more of their degrees to African Americans, and a slightly higher percentage of their degrees to Native American students (Maxim & Muro, 2020). This is in large part because they admit a greater share of students from those underrepresented groups (Maxim & Muro, 2020). For example, 43% of PCUs have an open-access mission, meaning they provide educational opportunities to any and every student who applied (Crisp, 2019).

Given that access and affordability are two key parts of the mission and purpose of PCUs, those institutions often serve as an important source of educational equity for low-income students (Maxim & Muro, 2020). Part of this is a result of cost, since PCUs tend to have lower tuition and overall costs than PRUs (Maxim & Muro, 2020). A glaring statistic that reflects those institutions commitment to access and affordability as part of their mission and purpose was the fact that they enrolled a higher proportion of Pell Grant students than PRUs (Maxim &

Muro, 2020). As a result, PCUs educate thousands of students from underrepresented groups every year as part of their mission and purpose.

With their dedication to research and creativity, PCUs work to align degrees with regional economic needs (Fryar, 2015; Orphan & McClure, 2018). Soo (2011) found that PCUs' human capital efforts and research were often locally and regionally focused. Given their mission, purpose, and regional focus, most offered a broad array of discipline-based liberal arts and sciences courses and majors, along with a more or less standard set of professional programs in business, education, and selected health sciences (Miller & Skinner, 2012). In addition, research conducted by Maxim and Muro (2020) found that PCUs frequently educated individuals who filled critical community roles, such as (but not limited to) teachers, local health care professionals, and local government officials. Their research also discovered that among the fields with majors that were disproportionately awarded at PCUs relative to PRUs were health professions, education, and security-related fields, such as law enforcement and firefighting (Maxim & Muro, 2020).

Multiple studies have explored the role that PCUs and universities more broadly play as anchor institutions. For example, Maxim and Muro (2020) noted that PCUs conduct vital, regionally focused research and enhance the human capital capacity of the places in which they reside; hence, they play a vital role in mitigating the impacts of economic downturns by serving as a significant source of employment growth during periods of recovery. Maxim and Muro also found that counties in smaller communities with a public four-year university had smaller employment losses during the Great Recession than those without a university and saw higher aggregate employment growth during the subsequent recovery. Likewise, PCUs are typically among the largest (if not the largest) employers in smaller communities, and in micropolitan

areas, they account for 3.1% of direct employment; among nonmetropolitan counties, that share climbs to 4.8% (Maxim & Muro, 2020; Orphan & McClure, 2018).

F. The American Public Comprehensive University President

This section examined the current body of research on PCU presidents to acquire a better understanding of the president's background, duties, preparation, roles, responsibilities, and uses of time. This research also examined interactions and relationships between boards and presidents of PCUs. Acquiring a better understanding of the top challenges facing this unique group of institutions and leaders is vital to their future success. The presidency of PCUs is one of the least understood sectors of higher education leadership in the U.S.; this is because most scholarly research on the presidency in higher education has focused on community colleges, research universities, and selective liberal arts institutions (Kirst et al., 2010).

As a result, the PCU presidency has historically been an understudied segment of the U.S. higher education landscape (Grubb & Lazerson, 2005). In fact, Soo (2011) found the literature on PCU presidents to be relatively sparse. Therefore, this section sought to contribute to the understanding of PCU presidents by exploring and synthesizing the literature on this topic to better prepare a new generation of PCU presidents for their future roles and responsibilities.

A substantial amount of research on college and university presidents has been conducted by the American Council on Education (ACE), and this research has contributed to the understanding of PCU presidents. In fact, the 2017 edition of the American College President Study (ACPS) continued to be the most comprehensive examination of presidents from across the spectrum of American higher education. It presented information on the presidents' education, career path, length of service, race, ethnicity and gender (American Council on Education, 2017). For the first time, it included insight into how presidents perceive matters

related to diversity and inclusion, state funding, and their state's political climate (American Council on Education, 2017). For those reasons, the ACPS (2017), formed the foundation for this research on the American PCU president.

While the academic pathways taken by PCU presidents were unique for every individual, the ACPS (2017) found that most follow one of three similar patterns. According to the ACPS (2017), in 2016, approximately 30% of master's institutions' presidents received their highest-earned degree in education, the most of any field of study. The ACPS (2017) found the second most common degrees for master's institutions' presidents was social sciences degrees, followed by humanities and fine arts. This pattern is the same for bachelor's college presidents (American Council on Education, 2017).

The ACPS (2017) found that a vast majority of presidents held advanced or terminal degrees, whereas women presidents were more likely to have earned a Ph.D. or Ed.D. than their male peers. The study also determined that Caucasian and racial and ethnic minority presidents followed similar educational paths (American Council on Education, 2017). From this research, it can be discerned that most PCU presidents have earned a terminal degree; such as Ph.D. or Ed.D., typically in one of three disciplines; a doctorate in education, a doctorate in one of the social sciences, or a doctorate in either humanities or fine arts (American Council on Education, 2017).

The pathway to the PCU presidency was a unique journey for every individual, though there were common employment patterns (American Council on Education, 2017). For example, the vast majority of college and university presidents, including PCU presidents, were established leaders in higher education, with prior presidential experience and senior executive positions within academic affairs being the most common signposts on the path to the presidency

(American Council on Education, 2017). In fact, the ACPS (2017) noted that 24% of presidents of master's institutions served as president in the position immediately prior to their current presidency, and 25% of presidents of master's institutions had held two or more presidencies during their career (American Council on Education, 2017)

In comparison, approximately 19% of presidents of bachelor's colleges served as president in the position immediately prior to their current presidency, and 22% of presidents of bachelor's colleges had held two or more presidencies during their career (American Council on Education, 2017). Like the presidents of master's institutions, presidents from bachelor's colleges had served as provost, chief academic officer, dean, or other senior executive in academic affairs in their immediate prior position (American Council on Education, 2017).

According to the ACPS (2017), 85% of presidents held a position within higher education immediately prior to becoming president, while the remaining 15% held a position outside higher education, and these figures have remained relatively consistent since 2001 (American Council on Education, 2017). In fact, most PCU presidents previously worked at a different institution prior to becoming president of their current institution (American Council on Education, 2017). Thus, PCU presidents were less likely to be hired from within the same institution (American Council on Education, 2017). The growing percentage of presidents coming directly from another presidency suggested that boards tended to value previous presidential experience over continuity of leadership in the institution (American Council on Education, 2017).

The intersection of race and ethnicity on the pathway to the presidency revealed some interesting information. The ACPS (2017) discovered the share of presidents who had either served in a prior presidency or who had been a chief academic officer or dean prior to assuming the presidency varied for the three largest racial/ethnic groups (American Council on Education,

2017). African Americans were more likely to have previously served as president (27%), followed by Hispanic (25%), and white presidents (24%) (American Council on Education, 2017). However, Caucasian and Hispanic presidents were more likely than African American presidents to have been provost/CAO, dean, or other senior executive in academic affairs; whereas African American presidents were more likely to have served in other senior campus executive roles (American Council on Education, 2017). Finally, the study found that Caucasian presidents were more likely than African Americans and Hispanics to have come directly from a position outside higher education, whereas Hispanic presidents were the least likely of the three groups to have ever worked outside higher education (American Council on Education, 2017).

According to the ACPS (2017), the demographic profile of the typical college or university president was slowly changing, but it continued to be primarily white (83%) and male (70%) (American Council on Education, 2017). The typical president in 2016 was 62 years of age, held a PhD, and had an average length of service of seven years (American Council on Education, 2017). The ACPS found that roughly 30% of presidents of public master's institutions (PMIs) were women, and 27% of PMIs identified themselves as a racial or ethnic minority (American Council on Education, 2017). In general, men of color had greater representation than women of color at PCUs (American Council on Education, 2017). The comparatively large proportion of PMIs headed by minorities is due in part to the concentration of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in this classification (American Council on Education, 2017). When minority serving institutions were excluded, 16% of PMIs were headed by minorities (American Council on Education, 2017).

The representation of racial and ethnic minority groups in the college presidency has progressed slowly and steadily, but they continued to be underrepresented (American Council on Education, 2017). For example, in 1986, racial and ethnic minority groups represented 8% of all college and university presidents, and by 2016, minorities accounted for 17% of presidents, an increase of 9% from 30 years ago (American Council on Education, 2017). Although the representation of racial/ethnic minority presidents has increased for all institutions since 1986, this number declines if minority serving institutions are not included (American Council on Education, 2017). In terms of representation, the largest growth in the proportion of minority presidents occurred at doctorate-granting universities and associate colleges (American Council on Education, 2017). Given that access, diversity, and inclusion are a part of PCUs' mission and purpose, the lack of diversity in the presidency is an issue.

Like the representation of racial and ethnic minority groups, women were underrepresented in the college presidency, highlighting a longstanding gender gap in presidential leadership (American Council on Education, 2017). Although Snyder et al., (2016) found that women accounted for more than half of the U.S. population and for the majority of all undergraduates (56%), and Johnson (2016) noted of all bachelor's degrees granted since 1981 and doctoral degrees conferred in the last decade, over half have been earned by women, and despite the fact that the proportion of women presidents has tripled since 1986, women only account for 30% of presidents (American Council on Education, 2017).

The diversity of the college president can also be examined through the intersection of gender and race and ethnicity. In 2016, women of color were greatly underrepresented, representing only 5% of all presidents; meanwhile, men of color represented 12% of all presidents (American Council on Education, 2017). Likewise, the ACPS (2017) discovered

when looking at representation within gender that women and men of color represented a small proportion of all presidents, consisting of 17 % of their respective gender groups in 2016 (American Council on Education, 2017).

Another popular topic in demographic trends was the graying of the presidency. The most recent ACPS (2017) discovered that PCU presidents were older than presidents in this classification in previous survey years (American Council on Education, 2017). As of 2016, the average age of a master's institution president was 63 years, whereas the average age of a bachelor's college president was 60 years (American Council on Education, 2017). The data indicated that retirements may soon have a substantial impact on the leadership of master's institutions.

In terms of length of service, the ACPS (2017) found that on average, presidents of PCUs served for six years (American Council on Education, 2017). When examining presidents by gender, the ACPS (2017) found that women served fewer years than men on average (American Council on Education, 2017). When examining presidents by racial and ethnic group, American Indian presidents reported the highest average number of years of service, followed by African American and Hispanic presidents, all of whom served slightly less time in their current role than Caucasian presidents (American Council on Education, 2017).

The role of PCU presidents required vision, intellect, social acumen, dedication, and business savvy, with a significant amount of time devoted to fundraising, legislative relationship building, and working with those with a vested interest in higher education and the university in specific (Braswell, 2006). They provide intellectual leadership, embody institutional values, and shape institutional policy and practice, while serving as advocates, caretakers, and crisis managers for the institution by working with past, current, and future students; they also spend

time with boards, donors, agencies, lawmakers, faculty, community members, and business leaders (American Council on Education, 2017). In a recent article in the Chronicle of Higher Education, the former chancellor of the University of Texas system called the job of college president “the toughest job in the nation” (Thomason, 2018, p.1).

One of the primary roles of PCU presidents was focusing on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising (American Council on Education, 2017). In terms of use of time, PCU presidents cited spending the most time on budget and financial management, with (64.9 %) of their time being focused on this area (American Council on Education, 2017). The second area in which PCU presidents cited spending most of their time on was fundraising (58.1%) (American Council on Education, 2017). The following areas were also listed as ways in which PCU presidents spend their time: managing a senior-level team (42%), governing board relations (33.2%), enrollment management (31.8%), strategic planning (29.1%), community relations (24.6%), internal communication (23.4%), personnel issues (21%), external communication (19.5%), capital improvement projects (17.2%), academic issues (14.4%), government relations – state level (14.8%), shared governance 13.8%, and accreditation (11.1%) (American Council on Education, 2017).

Dealing with internal stakeholders is a key duty and responsibility of PCU presidents. The ACPS (2017) identified students as the internal group who least understood institutional challenges, followed by faculty, with the third-highest designation belonging to athletics (American Council on Education, 2017). Conversely, PCU presidents identified the provost, office of the president staff and development and fundraising staff, as the three internal constituent groups most supportive of advancing the institutional mission (American Council on Education, 2017).

Dealing with external stakeholders was also a key duty and responsibility of PCU presidents. The ACPS (2017) identified State legislators as the external constituent group who least understood institutional challenges (American Council on Education, 2017). The governor's office was identified as the second-highest group with a limited understanding of institutional challenges, followed by federal agencies, which were viewed as the third least understanding external constituent group (American Council on Education, 2017). Meanwhile, the ACPS (2017) found that presidents chose boards of regents, local community leaders, and alumni as the three external groups that offered the most support (American Council on Education, 2017). This was interesting given that Public Agenda (2015) found that boards were often not equipped to address the challenges related to higher education.

Other duties that PCU presidents reported regularly engaging in since becoming president included researching and writing about higher education issues (American Council on Education, 2017). As community leaders, many presidents served on the governing boards of not-for-profit organizations, corporations, and other colleges and universities (American Council on Education, 2017). The changing demographics of the student body, along with a host of other factors, have made apparent the need to develop and sustain campus environments that are inclusive of all perspectives and backgrounds (American Council on Education, 2017). As a result, presidents stated that they have a duty to address issues related to campus climate, such as the status of women and racial minorities on campus (American Council on Education, 2017).

The challenges, duties, roles, and responsibilities of PCU presidents were quite simply overwhelming. As a result, this research focused on the top two areas in which PCU presidents spend most of their time. As previously noted, PCU presidents cited spending most of their time on budgeting and financial management, followed by fundraising (American Council on

Education, 2017). The focus on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising stems from decades of declining state budgets that have been under tremendous pressure as COVID-19, the Great Recession, Medicaid expenditures, prison and public safety costs, primary and secondary education budgets, and other vital societal services have eroded state budgets and led to decreased higher education funding (Cheslock & Gianneschi, 2008; Public Agenda, 2015). In the meantime, the decline in state support for PCUs has prompted presidents to turn to alumni, friends, corporations, and foundations for private funds with new and increased fundraising efforts to redress lost state appropriations (Jackson, 2013). Due to these trends, the ACPS (2017), surveyed presidents to get their thoughts on which revenue streams were likely to decrease and increase in the next five years (American Council on Education, 2017).

According to public university presidents cited in the ACPS (2017), the revenue sources most likely to increase over the next five years were revenues from private gifts, grants, contracts, tuition and fees, and endowments (American Council on Education, 2017). At the same time, public university presidents identified revenues from state government and funds from the federal government as the sources most likely to decrease during the same time span (American Council on Education, 2017). Among public college or university presidents, PCU presidents expressed the strongest belief in a coming decline of revenues from both state governments and the federal government (American Council on Education, 2017). Mindful that a large share of total revenues is on the wane, PCU presidents have been looking to private gifts, grants, contracts, tuition and fees, and endowments as a means to diversify their funding bases (Cottom, 2017).

The challenges from declining federal and state revenues have led to an evolution in the PCU presidency, with a greater emphasis being placed on financial analysis, fundraising, and budget management competencies (Tekler & Atan, 2014). In a study conducted by Deloitte's Center for Higher Education Excellence and Georgia Tech's Center for 21st Century Universities, Selingo et al., (2017) ranked six skills that presidents needed to possess when they assumed office; among them were financial and operational knowledge and fundraising.

Those trends were problematic given that presidents viewed fiscal management and fundraising as their two greatest challenges and listed fundraising as the area where they were most unprepared (Strout, 2005). Those trends were also problematic because in terms of state political climate, nearly 41 % of presidents believed that their state political climate was hostile, whereas roughly 50% of presidents believed that their state political climate was supportive (American Council on Education, 2017).

The ACPS (2017) listed trustees as the external group that offered the most support to PCU presidents (American Council on Education, 2017). Trustees have governing authority over individual universities and, in many cases, over entire statewide systems of universities (Public Agenda, 2015). They hire and fire university and system presidents, interact with state lawmakers and local business leaders and are charged with securing their institutions' futures (Public Agenda, 2015). Although some are elected, most are typically volunteers appointed by governors; they often have limited expertise in higher education, but they are supposed to help their institutions address challenges related to finances, student success, and regional economic development without getting involved in day-to-day management (Public Agenda, 2015).

As a result, trustees were often not equipped to address challenges related to higher education. In fact, a recent survey conducted by Public Agenda (2015) found that presidents of PCUs felt that they contend with both disengagement and micromanagement by trustees. The presidents of PCUs also felt that trustees struggled to add value because they do not fully understand their institutions' missions (Public Agenda, 2015). Therefore, advocacy with external stakeholders often fell on the shoulders of PCU presidents (Public Agenda, 2015).

The research conducted by Public Agenda (2015) cited numerous examples of how trustees were ill equipped to address the challenges faced by PCUs. For example, in a recent survey conducted by Public Agenda (2015), trustees said finances were their top priority and the biggest challenge facing PCUs. Many of them stated that they did not understand higher education finances well enough to help their institutions address budgetary challenges, despite the fact that many PCU trustees have careers in business, banking, and law; however, they understand financial models well enough in their own fields, but do not understand higher education finances nearly as well (Public Agenda, 2015).

PCU trustees expected their institutions and presidents to engage in fundraising, but most of them stated they lacked the skills and training necessary to help their institutions do so effectively (Public Agenda, 2015). Generally speaking, trustees tended to see fundraising as primarily the responsibility of presidents, chancellors, and their staffs (Public Agenda, 2015). Most trustees were unable to assist PCU presidents with the challenges posed by higher education finances, which was problematic given that PCU presidents listed financial management and fundraising as the two areas that consumed most of their time and posed the biggest challenge to them (American Council on Education, 2017).

Trustees want their institutions to increase enrollment and improve retention and graduation rates, but few trustees prioritized understanding the details of innovations that could support student success (Public Agenda, 2015). Instead, they typically viewed their role as setting goals for improving retention and graduation, while leaving the details of how to achieve those goals to administrators, faculty, and staff (Public Agenda, 2015). This was problematic given PCUs' financial reliance on tuition as the main source of operating revenue (Soo, 2011). According to several presidents, PCUs have been forced to become more tuition dependent while remaining affordable for the students they serve (McClure, 2018). This meant that PCUs must be more responsive to the needs of students, and the demands of enrollment, since they were tuition-dependent and not buttressed by large endowments or a wealthy donor base (Soo, 2011).

Presidents and trustees of PCUs could balance shortfalls in state revenue by increasing tuition and fees, but many of them noted that raising tuition was politically difficult and would contravene their institutions' missions by making them less accessible (Public Agenda, 2015). Likewise, they noted that legislatures and governors have no appetite for tuition increases, with some imposing tuition freezes; thus, presidents and trustees of PCUs struggle to convince elected officials and policymakers regarding institutional needs (Public Agenda, 2015).

Whereas trustees emphasized the importance of advocating with elected officials and policymakers on behalf of their institutions as an important part of their role, nearly all stressed the difficulty of securing more funding in an era of overall lower budgets across state functions (Public Agenda, 2015). Therefore, preserving remaining levels of state funding or trying to make the case for increased funding were top priorities for trustees (Public Agenda, 2015). A dilemma facing PCUs was that trustees are an unusual group of stewards whose sense of fiduciary responsibility extended to asking if the institutions they govern can or should survive

(Miller & Skinner, 2012). Given the current fiscal landscape in higher education, elected officials and policymakers are asking PCUs to increase enrollment, graduation, and retention rates, without adequately funding those institutions (Public Agenda, 2015).

Trustees emphasized that students' careers and regional economic development are core aspects of PCUs missions, but few trustees said they were actively helping their institutions connect to regional employers (Public Agenda, 2015). Preparing students for careers and meeting regional workforce needs were core aspects of comprehensive universities' missions, but trustees often struggled to assist presidents and their institutions with meeting employers' expectations for preparing and training work-ready graduates (Public Agenda, 2015). As a result, most trustees seemed to let presidents and administrators take the lead on building workforce connections (Public Agenda, 2015).

Although trustees were supposed to help their institutions address challenges related to finances, student success, and regional economic development without getting involved in day-to-day management, they often felt overwhelmed by the volume of complex information given to them by administration and staff (Public Agenda, 2015). This has created an environment in which trustees often felt that they relied too much on administrators and staff to set agendas, frame problems, provide data and propose solutions (Public Agenda, 2015).

As a result, the relationship between presidents and trustees was defined by a lack of trust, which was common among trustees of higher education institutions (Public Agenda, 2015). This relationship was a byproduct of the fact that trustees typically encountered elected officials who were skeptical of higher education institutions because neither trustees nor their institutions provided good answers to elected officials' questions about student outcomes or how money was spent (Public Agenda, 2015). This created an environment in which trustees did not always trust

the information they got from administrators and staff, making it harder for them to ask for more money or otherwise advocate for the institutions' needs (Public Agenda, 2015).

Furthermore, trustees typically felt that elected officials did not understand how much higher education benefits their states economically by meeting workforce needs, attracting employers, and creating jobs (Public Agenda, 2015). Consequently, in this uncertain environment, one thing was clear, presidents and their boards must work together to provide meaningful leadership at PCUs (Skinner & Miller, 2012).

The purpose of this section was to understand the key challenges that PCUs and their presidents face. Given the overwhelming scope of the challenges, duties, roles, and responsibilities of PCU presidents, this research focused on the top two areas in which PCU presidents spend most of their time. Although the literature on PCUs and their presidents was sparse (Soo, 2011), examining the current body of research on PCUs and their presidents yielded some interesting conclusions. For example, the ACPS (2017) listed the top five issues facing future PCU presidents. The following top areas or issues that future PCU presidents would need to be prepared to address were budgeting and financial management, fundraising, enrollment management, diversity and equity issues, and assessment of student learning (American Council on Education, 2017).

Of the top five challenges facing PCU presidents, the ACPS (2017), found that presidents overwhelmingly agreed that their biggest frustration was never having enough money, which was the reason why presidents cited budgeting and financial management as the area in which they spend most of their time (American Council on Education, 2017). Likewise, they spend most of their time on budgeting and financial management due to decades of declining state revenues and support for higher education institutions (Jackson, 2012). Therefore, fundraising

was one of the most demanding and visible roles of a university president, and they should expect to spend an inordinate amount of time raising funds (Kaufman, 2004; Nelson, 2009).

Those challenges are particularly problematic for PCU presidents, given that there was tremendous pressure on PCU presidents to be effective fiscal managers, fundraisers, and internal leaders (Kaufman, 2004). However, fiscal management and fundraising cannot be the only areas in which presidents spend their time (Nelson, 2009). Despite the fact that fundraising and fiscal management were the two areas in which PCU presidents spend most of their time, conversely those were the two areas where they typically feel most unprepared (American Council on Education, 2007; American Council on Education, 2017). Adding to this dilemma was the fact that PCUs tended to struggle with prestige and status, because they often lacked the traditional trappings of prestige in U.S. postsecondary education (Brewer et al., 2002).

Although the main purpose of the research was to understand the overwhelming scope of the challenges, duties, roles, and responsibilities faced by PCU presidents from their perspectives, the following other noteworthy conclusions were found. The greying of the presidency, along with the underrepresentation of minority and women presidents, poses demographic problems for PCUs given that their mission and purpose is to serve underrepresented populations (American Council on Education, 2017). With presidents aging out, and having shorter tenures, the chances of increasing minority and women presidents diminishes, since boards prefer to hire presidents with experience (American Council on Education, 2017; Public Agenda, 2015). If the applicant pool of experienced presidents consists primarily of white men, then boards and PCUs will struggle to create the kind of change necessary to diversify the presidency (American Council on Education, 2017). Furthermore, since PCUs reduce inequities in education by providing access to a variety of underrepresented

groups, their focus on diversifying the presidency is more important than ever, given changing demographics and the populations that these institutions serve (American Council on Education, 2017).

The rationale for researching PCU presidents in Oklahoma is based on the fact that PCUs and their presidency are one of the least understood sectors in higher education in the U.S. (Kirst et al., 2010). Specifically, the ACPS (2017) cited that presidents spend most of their time on budgeting and financial management, followed closely by fundraising, but they have relatively little experience in these areas; hence, these are the areas in which they feel the least prepared (American Council on Education, 2017).

Although this lack of experience was troubling, a more pressing dilemma may be the fact that boards have limited experience in higher education, so they often are not equipped to assist PCU presidents with budgeting, financial management, and fundraising issues (Public Agenda, 2015). Likewise, many of them stated that they do not understand higher education finances well enough to help their institutions address budgetary challenges despite the fact that many PCU trustees have careers in business, banking, and law (Public Agenda, 2015). If a banker, a business CEO, and a lawyer are unable to understand higher education finances, how reasonable is it for boards to expect presidents to be well versed in this area?

Therefore, the background of PCU presidents is critically important. For example, 70.1% of PCU presidents had been either a former university president, chief academic officer (provost), or senior executive in academic affairs in their immediate former position (American Council on Education, 2017). However, approximately 6% of PCU presidents came from a background as a senior executive in business and/or administration as their immediate prior position (American Council on Education, 2017). Similarly, approximately 5% of PCU

presidents came from a background in institutional advancement development or fundraising (American Council on Education, 2017). Thus, most PCU presidents do not come from a fundraising background, and many have little to no training in this area, even with newly expanded responsibilities and expectations (Hartley & Godin, 2009; Nesbit et al., 2006).

As a result, Selingo et al., (2017), found that “fundraising is essential from a president’s first day in office, but that doesn’t mean presidents are ready and willing to take on fundraising tasks, and despite the attention given to this issue over the past several years, preparing presidents to cultivate donors hasn’t improved much, if at all” (p. 2). Furthermore, Nesbit et al (2006) discovered that over half of the presidents surveyed from the ACPS (2007), would prefer training in fundraising than additional experience in any other single area (American Council on Education, 2007).

Although the literature on PCUs and their presidents was sparse in comparison to that of other institutions in higher education, there is a particular need to conduct further research on the challenges posed by the lack of experience of PCU presidents in the areas of fiscal management and fundraising. This is particularly important given that the ACPS (2017) cited these two as areas where PCU presidents spend most of their time but consequently are the areas in which they feel least prepared (American Council on Education, 2017). To date, little research has focused on the intersection of fiscal management and fundraising among the ranks of PCU presidents, with the latter receiving most of the scholarly attention.

G. Chapter Summary

Historically, PCUs have been one of the least understood sectors of higher education in the U.S. As a result, defining these institutions has been challenging. For the purposes of this research, only those institutions in the 50 states that were public, degree-granting, postsecondary institutions that currently award a bachelor's degree were considered to be PCUs. Specifically, this study examined only institutions in the state of Oklahoma that OSRHE has designated as PCUs. The collective histories, missions, and purposes of PCUs are remarkably similar given the number of and diversity among these institutions (Public Agenda, 2015).

In terms of the American PCU presidency, most follow one of three academic pathways to the presidency, and they tend to hold a terminal degree (American Council on Education, 2017). The vast majority of them are established leaders in higher education with prior presidential experience, and the majority of PCU presidents are white males (American Council on Education, 2017). One of the primary roles of PCU presidents is focusing on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising; thus, these are the areas in which they spend the majority of their time (American Council on Education, 2017). However, most PCU presidents do not have a background in these areas, and most PCU presidents stated that these are the areas in which they feel the least prepared (American Council on Education, 2017). Adding to this dilemma is the fact that trustees are often not equipped to address the challenges related to higher education (Public Agenda, 2015). For these reasons, this review of related literature reinforced the need of the study to understand the role that OPCU presidents play in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

Chapter III. Research Methods

Over the past two decades in the state of Oklahoma, a dramatically shrinking share of the higher education budget has come from the state, and this pattern has had a disproportionate effect on the state's PCUs (Fine, 2019; Halter, 2019). For OPCUs and their leaders, the low levels of public support by the state have become a pattern, rather than an anomaly. This pattern has caused OPCU presidents to spend an ever-increasing amount of their time on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising in their quest to provide adequate funding for their institutions (American Council on Education, 2017).

This pattern is problematic given the fact that most OPCU presidents do not come from a background in financial management and fundraising (American Council on Education, 2017). Compounding the problem is the fact that most PCU presidents, according to the ACPS (2017), cited that budgeting and financial management and fundraising are the two areas in which they spend most of their time, but consequently, these are the areas in which they feel least prepared in terms of job duties and responsibilities (American Council on Education, 2017). Therefore, the purpose for conducting this study was to describe and examine the perceptions of OPCU presidents about their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

The chapter on research methods included the following topics: philosophical assumptions and an interpretative framework regarding the research approach; the sample of the study was defined; the role and mission of the case studies was defined; the research instrumentation and procedures were defined; the data collection procedures as well as ethical considerations were addressed; data analysis, including validation of the findings, was addressed; and the chapter summary concluded the chapter.

A. Research Design

This study used exploratory methodologies in its design. Exploratory research aims to explore specific aspects of the research area to generate insights about a situation (Saunders et al., 2012). Exploratory research allows for a further examination of the topic and uses qualitative as well as other methods, including interviews and previous studies, to complement the research in order to develop hypotheses for further research (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Shields & Tajalli, 2006).

The qualitative portion of the study used an interpretation of social constructivism and a qualitative research methodology, specifically transcendental phenomenology. Exploratory methodologies use qualitative research as a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009). Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation (Creswell, 2009).

The philosophical worldview of the research adhered to the social constructivist worldview. Social constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2009). Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences that are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas (Creswell, 2009). The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation

being studied (Creswell, 2009). The questions become broad and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation, typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons (Creswell, 2009). The more open-ended the questioning, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life settings (Creswell, 2009). Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives (Creswell, 2009).

Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants (Creswell, 2009). Understanding the lived experiences marks phenomenology as a philosophy, as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). In this process, the researcher brackets or sets aside his or her own experiences in order to understand those of the participants in the study (Nieswiadomy, 1993).

Transcendental phenomenology (TPh), largely developed by Husserl, is a philosophical approach to qualitative research methodology seeking to understand human experiences (Moustakas, 1994). According to Moustakas (1994), the philosophical tenets of TPh are noema, noesis, noeses, noetic, and epoche. Pure TPh is grounded in the concept and conditioned upon setting aside all preconceived ideas (epoche) to see phenomena through unclouded glasses, thereby allowing the true meaning of phenomena to naturally emerge with and within their own identity (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) noted that noema is defined as “not the real object but the phenomenon, not the tree but the appearance of the tree” (p. 29), that which is “perceived as such” (p. 30), and “that which is experienced, the what of experience, the object-

correlate” (p. 69). Moustakas (1994) found the term noesis to be defined as the “perfect self-evidence” (p. 30), “the act of perceiving, feeling, thinking, remembering, or judging” (p.69), and the “way in which the what is experienced, the experiencing, or act of experiencing, the subject-correlate” (p. 69). In addition, noesis was defined as “bringing into being the consciousness of something” (Moustakas, 1994, p.69). Noetic-noematic schema represents the connection between an individual and the world (Sousa, 2014).

B. Sample

According to the AASCU (2020), there are nearly 400 college and university members in the United States. PCUs have similar missions and purposes because they share a learning-centered and teaching-centered culture, a historic commitment to underserved student populations, and a dedication to research and creativity that advances their regions’ economic progress and community development (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2020b). An important aspect of their mission and purpose is to support innovation in teaching and learning through research and collaborative projects with the end goal of improving all students’ educational and career outcomes (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2020b).

In the state of Oklahoma there are 10 PCUs, including Cameron University (CU), East Central University (ECU), Langston University (LU), Northeastern State University (NSU), Northwestern Oklahoma State University (NWOSU), Oklahoma Panhandle State University (OPSU), Rogers State University (RSU), Southeastern Oklahoma State University (SEOSU), Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU), and University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021c).

Since the purpose for conducting this study was to describe and examine the perceptions of OPCU presidents about their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, the population for this study was the 10 OPCU presidents in the state of Oklahoma. This study used exploratory methodologies and a qualitative approach because qualitative studies aim to provide illumination and understanding of complex psychological issues and are most useful for answering humanistic “why?” and “how?” questions (Marshall, 1996).

Marshall (1996) found that an appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question. He found that for simple questions or very detailed studies, this might be in single figures; for complex questions large samples and a variety of sampling techniques might be necessary (Marshall, 1996). As a result, he noted that in practice, the number of required subjects usually becomes obvious as the study progresses, as new categories, themes, or explanations stop emerging from the data (data saturation) (Marshall, 1996). This requires a flexible research design and an iterative, cyclical approach to sampling, data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Marshall, 1996).

Creswell and Poth (2018), discussed how they had seen the number of participants in phenomenological studies range from “1” to “365”; however, they stated that Duke (1984) recommended the selection of “3” to “10” participants (p.59). Similarly, Polkinghorne (1989) stated that 5-25 individuals who share similar phenomenon, or experiences, should suffice as a suitable number of participants. Therefore, this study followed those guidelines to interview and collect the information needed to document the perspectives of OPCU presidents and analyze their role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising at their respective institutions.

I used a convenience sample (also known as availability sampling or haphazard sampling), which is a type of nonprobability or nonrandom sampling where members of the target population who meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographic proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study (Etikan et al., 2016). I used this type of sampling to select between 5-7 participants who identified as: (a) presidents, (b) of public comprehensive universities, (c) in the state of Oklahoma, and (d) who agreed to participate in the study. The rationale for choosing a convenience sample was based on the fact that in this type of sampling, the main objective was to collect information from participants who were easily accessible to the researcher for study participation (Etikan et al., 2016).

According to Etkin et al. (2016), “It is compulsory for the researcher to describe how the sample would differ from the one that was randomly selected. It is also necessary to describe the subjects who might be excluded during the selection process or the subjects who are overrepresented in the sample” (p. 2). The main assumption for using convenience sampling was that the members of the target population were homogeneous (Etkin et al., 2016). Therefore, the assumption was that there would be no difference in the research results obtained by selecting the 10 OPCU presidents from a random sample. Since the total population for this study consisted of 10 OPCU presidents, the method for selection was to choose the first five to seven presidents who responded to the email or until data saturation was achieved. The emails were sent in alphabetical order in the same day.

C. Case Study Institutions: Role and Mission

The purpose for conducting this study was to describe and examine the perceptions of OPCU presidents about their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. As a result, the following section reviewed the mission, purpose, degrees awarded, and student demographics of Oklahoma's 10 PCUs. The information regarding institutional mission, purpose, and degrees awarded was obtained from institutional websites. The information on student demographics was obtained from OSHRE's statistics on annual headcount by demographics, tier, institution, and concurrent and state status for 2018-2019. OSHRE's statistics on student demographics used the following classifications: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian Middle Far East, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Multiple, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Non-Resident Alien, Unknown, and White, Non-Hispanic.

The first institution to be examined was Cameron University (CU). The mission of CU is to provide a diverse and dynamic student body access to quality educational opportunities by fostering a student-centered academic environment that combines innovative classroom teaching with experiential learning in order to prepare students for professional success, responsible citizenship, lifelong learning, and meaningful contributions to a rapidly changing world; while also acting as a driving force in the cultural life and economic development of the region (Cameron University, 2021b).

The purpose of CU is to provide excellence in teaching, scholarship, service, and mentoring; thus, student learning is the institution's top priority (Cameron University, 2021b). The institution serves students from around the globe, offering nearly 50 degrees, such as associate's degrees, bachelor's degrees, and master's degrees (Cameron University, 2021a).

Another primary role of the institution is to provide leadership in the community and region by emphasizing the stimulation of economic development through partnerships and collaborative relationships (Cameron University, 2021b). The institution also provides cultural and social development by serving the community and region and by sharing the institutions expertise (Cameron University, 2021b).

The demographic profile of CU for 2018-2019, consisted of a total student body of 5,169 students. Among the student body, 302 students identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 85 students identified as Asian, Middle Far East, 609 students identified as Black or African American, 728 students identified as Hispanic or Latino, 497 students identified as Multiple, 21 students identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 172 students identified as Non-Resident Alien, 168 students were classified as Unknown, and 2,587 students identified as White, Non-Hispanic (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021b).

The mission of East Central University (ECU) is to foster a learning environment in which students, faculty, staff, and community interact to educate students for life in a rapidly changing and culturally diverse society, the institution also provides leadership for economic development and cultural enhancement (East Central University, 2021b).

The purpose of ECU is to be Oklahoma's premier comprehensive student-centered regional university, offering outstanding academic programs and experiences for its students and contributing to the betterment of the region and beyond (East Central University, 2021a). The institution offers more than 70-degree programs, such as the Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts degree and master's degrees (East Central University, 2021a).

The demographic profile of ECU for 2018-2019 consisted of a total student body of 4,289 students. Among the student body, 565 students identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 17 students identified as Asian, Middle Far East, 184 students identified as Black or African American, 243 students identified as Hispanic or Latino, 266 students identified as Multiple, 14 students identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 337 students identified as Non-Resident Alien, 94 students were classified as Unknown, and 2,569 students identified as White, Non-Hispanic (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021b).

The mission of Langston University (LU) is grounded in its rich traditions as a historically Black college and university and a land-grant institution that offers quality post-secondary education to diverse populations through academics, research, community engagement, and extension and co-curricular experiences that lead to professional competence and degree completion (Langston University, 2021b).

The purpose of LU is to foster an environment that cultivates leaders, innovators, and engaged citizens who meet the challenges of local, national, and global communities through a broad range of degree offerings, such as associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and the Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.).

The demographic profile of LU for 2018-2019 consisted of a total student body of 2,625 students. Among the student body, 26 students identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 7 students identified as Asian, Middle Far East, 1,374 students identified as Black or African American, 61 students identified as Hispanic or Latino, 156 students identified as Multiple, 0 students identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 24 students identified as Non-Resident Alien, 860 students were classified as Unknown, and 117 students identified as White, Non-Hispanic (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021b).

The mission of Northeastern State University (NSU) is founded on the rich educational heritage of the Cherokee Nation; the campuses of Northeastern State University provide its diverse communities with lifelong learning through a broad array of undergraduate, graduate, and professional doctoral degree programs (Northeastern State University, 2021).

The purpose of NSU is to ensure student success by providing quality teaching, challenging curricula, research and scholarly activities, immersive learning opportunities, and service to local and professional communities (Northeastern State University, 2021). The institution's dedicated faculty and staff offer a service-oriented, supportive learning environment where students prepare to achieve professional and personal success in a multicultural and global society (Northeastern State University, 2021). The institution offers bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and the Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) degree.

The demographic profile of NSU for 2018-2019 consisted of a total student body of 9,293 students. Among the student body, 1,628 students identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 200 students identified as Asian, Middle Far East, 390 students identified as Black or African American, 532 students identified as Hispanic or Latino, 1,761 students identified as Multiple, 4 students identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 217 students identified as Non-Resident Alien, 54 students were classified as Unknown, and 4,507 students identified as White, Non-Hispanic (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021b).

The mission of Northwestern Oklahoma State University (NWOSU) is to provide quality educational and cultural opportunities to learners with diverse needs by cultivating ethical leadership and service, critical thinking, and fiscal responsibility (Northwestern Oklahoma State University, 2021).

The purpose of NWOSU is to provide convenient access to higher education opportunities to a diverse population, including non-traditional students, to assist them in meeting education and career goals in a supportive environment (Northwestern Oklahoma State University, 2021). The institution offers the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree and master's degree programs, as well as a Doctorate in Nursing Practice (Northwestern Oklahoma State University, 2021).

The demographic profile of NWOSU for 2018-2019, consisted of a total student body of 2,363 students. Among the student body, 187 students identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 17 students identified as Asian, Middle Far East, 184 students identified as Black or African American, 243 students identified as Hispanic or Latino, 266 students identified as Multiple, 14 students identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 337 students identified as Non-Resident Alien, 94 students were classified as Unknown, and 1,543 students identified as White, Non-Hispanic (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021b).

The mission of Oklahoma Panhandle State University (OPSU) is rooted in progress through knowledge the institution is committed to promoting excellence in the preparation of students for success in a global community by focusing on student learning, resource optimization, graduate production, and life-long learning (Oklahoma Panhandle State University, 2021b).

The purpose of OPSU is to foster student learning through empowerment, innovation, access, and student-centered support by engaging in partnerships and collaboration, and by providing comprehensive student experiences focused on promoting excellence across each student's academic career to graduation and beyond. The institution also strives to improve the quality of life and transform the communities it serves through engagement and partnerships

(Oklahoma Panhandle State University, 2021a). The programs of study offered at OPSU lead to nearly 60 different baccalaureate and associate degrees (Oklahoma Panhandle State University, 2021a).

The demographic profile of OPSU for 2018-2019 consisted of a total student body of 1,466 students. Among the student body, 44 students identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 10 students identified as Asian, Middle Far East, 73 students identified as Black or African American, 391 students identified as Hispanic or Latino, 36 students identified as Multiple, 1 student identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 30 students identified as Non-Resident Alien, 395 students were classified as Unknown, and 486 students identified as White, Non-Hispanic (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021b).

The mission of Rogers State University (RSU) is to ensure students develop the skills and knowledge required to achieve professional and personal goals in dynamic local and global communities (Rogers State University, 2021).

The purpose of RSU is to cultivate a vibrant campus culture while delivering substantive, relevant degree programs that align with area workforce needs through curricular and co-curricular offerings, the institution promotes and embraces cultural diversity and global awareness (Rogers State University, 2021). The institution offers associates degrees, bachelor's degrees, and master's degrees.

The demographic profile of RSU for 2018-2019 consisted of a total student body of 4,387 students. Among the student body, 630 students identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 71 students identified as Asian, Middle Far East, 178 students identified as Black or African American, 256 students identified as Hispanic or Latino, 638 students identified as Multiple, 8 students identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 68 students identified as Non-

Resident Alien, 55 students were classified as Unknown, and 2,483 students identified as White, Non-Hispanic (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021b).

The mission of Southeastern Oklahoma State University (SEOSU) is to provide an environment of academic excellence that enables students to reach their highest potential by having personal access to excellent teaching, challenging academic programs, and extracurricular experiences. Students will develop skills and habits that promote values for career preparation, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning (Southeastern Oklahoma State University, 2021).

The purpose of SEOSU is to provide a quality undergraduate education by offering an array of baccalaureate-level programs that prepare students for a changing society (Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Scope and Function, 2021). In addition, the institution offers selected graduate level programs to serve the needs of the region, and the institution fosters the region's cultural opportunities, economic growth, environmental quality, and scientific and technological progress, as well as social and personal well-being (Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Scope and Function, 2021).

The demographic profile of SEOSU for 2018-2019 consisted of a total student body of 5,698 students. Among the student body, 701 students identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 112 students identified as Asian, Middle Far East, 403 students identified as Black or African American, 365 students identified as Hispanic or Latino, 890 students identified as Multiple, 7 students identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 103 students identified as Non-Resident Alien, 0 students were classified as Unknown, and 3,117 students identified as White, Non-Hispanic (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021b).

The mission of Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) is to support students and community through its integration of effective teaching, scholarly and creative endeavors, and civic engagement (Southwestern Oklahoma State University, 2021a).

The purpose of SWOSU is to foster a shared commitment to students by providing high-quality instruction, involvement, services, scholarly endeavors, creative activities, and service learning by establishing a foundation for student success and by pursuing the exchange of ideas, research, and leadership for the public good (Southwestern Oklahoma State University, 2021b). The institution offers associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees, as well as a Doctorate of Pharmacy (Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Academics, 2021).

The demographic profile of SWOSU for 2018-2019 consisted of a total student body of 6,000 students. Among the student body, 248 students identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 146 students identified as Asian, Middle Far East, 259 students identified as Black or African American, 590 students identified as Hispanic or Latino, 497 students identified as Multiple, 4 students identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 268 students identified as Non-Resident Alien, 178 students were classified as Unknown, and 3,810 students identified as White, Non-Hispanic (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021b).

The mission of the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) is to help students learn by providing transformative education experiences to students so that they may become productive, creative, ethical, and engaged citizens and leaders serving our global community by contributing to the intellectual, cultural, economic, and social advancement of the communities and individuals it serves (University of Central Oklahoma, 2021a).

The purpose of UCO is to actively respond to the needs and opportunities of the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area by pursuing innovative partnerships, while adhering to the institutions fundamental commitment to provide transformative teaching and learning experiences through student engagement in experiential learning activities that advance the quality of life for all, by supporting life-long learning and work force development and expansion, and by the impactful contribution of research and professional service expertise to the metropolitan area (University of Central Oklahoma, 2021a).

The institution offers more than 100 baccalaureate degrees and over 70 graduate degrees at the master's level, as well as a Ph.D. through an international collaboration with Swansea University Wales, U.K. (University of Central Oklahoma, Academics, 2021).

The demographic profile of UCO for 2018-2019 consisted of a total student body of 18,043 students. Among the student body, 672 students identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 634 students identified as Asian, Middle Far East, 1,639 students identified as Black or African American, 1,957 students identified as Hispanic or Latino, 1,749 students identified as Multiple, 31 students identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 1,028 students identified as Non-Resident Alien, 491 students were classified as Unknown, and 9,842 students identified as White, Non-Hispanic (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021b).

The mission and purpose of Oklahoma's PCUs are similar to those of other PCUs throughout the country. For example, their missions are defined, variously, in terms of a designated role within a state's system of higher education, geographically with the expectation that most students reside within 1-3 hours of campus, and in terms of the degree of comprehensiveness or specialization of the institution's degree offerings and curriculum (Miller & Skinner, 2012).

D. Research Approach

The research instrument utilized for the study was an interview-based questionnaire that was designed to assess the role of OPCU presidents in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. The survey for this study was designed by myself with the guidance of my dissertation director, Dr. Michael Miller. Inspiration for this survey was derived from the works of David V. Tolliver III's (2020) dissertation entitled, *The Postsecondary Enrollment of Black American Men: The Perceived Influence of Environmental Factors* from Robert L. Jackson's (2012) dissertation entitled *The American Public Comprehensive University: An Exploratory Study of the President's Role in Fundraising* and from Jackson's (2013) article, "The Prioritization of and Time Spent on Fundraising Duties by Public Comprehensive University Presidents."

The interview-based questionnaire that served as the interview protocol consisted of five broad-based, open-ended questions designed to provide introspection regarding the role of OPCU presidents in those areas (see Appendix A). The first question focused on the president's role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising by examining topics such as, previous experience, formal education and training, informal education and training, professional affiliations, and mentors or role models.

The second question focused on the personal and professional characteristics that presidents perceived were necessary to be competent in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising by examining their perspectives regarding personal and professional strengths and weaknesses in those areas, as well as questions they may have had regarding their role in those areas, and assessing their perspectives on their personal and professional preparation for their role in those areas.

The third question focused on the president's prior experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising by examining topics such as their personal experiences, friendships and social organizations, memberships in professional associations, external board services, and pertinent certifications, conferences attended, or coursework in those areas.

The fourth question focused on the president's perception regarding how their previous experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising has contributed to their current success, as well as, how it will contribute to their future success in those areas.

The fifth question focused on how much time those presidents perceive they spend on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising by examining topics such as, if they spend a proportionate amount of time in those areas, if not, then which areas they spend most of their time on and why, and how they determine what is the best use of their time.

E. Role of the Researcher

As the researcher conducting this study, I acknowledge that I chose to study this topic because I work at a PCU in the state of Oklahoma, and I am interested in one day becoming a university president. In addition, I engaged in "Backyard" research, which according to Glesne and Peshkin (1992) involves studying the researcher's own organizations, friends, or immediate work setting.

However, this can often lead to compromises in the researcher's ability to disclose information and can raise difficult power issues (Creswell, 2009). In order to guard against bias and to create reader confidence in the accuracy of the findings, I refrained from using any of my personal experiences when viewing phenomena under examination as part of this research. Therefore, my research was free of personal judgment and reflected an unbiased perspective that was guided through the epoche process (Moustakas, 1994). As such, I used the lens of

transcendental perspective to view the world. Moustakas (1994) defined transcendental as “in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time” (p. 34). Creswell and Poth (2018) described this process as “reflexivity,” and Creswell (2009), noted that with these concerns in mind, inquirers explicitly identify reflexively their biases, values, and personal background, that may shape their interpretations formed during a study.

F. Collection of Data

Prior to conducting the study, I sought approval from the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix B). The IRB at the University of Arkansas “recommends policies, and monitors their implementation, on the use of human beings as subjects for physical, mental and social experimentation, in and out of class” (University of Arkansas, 2021). “Policies recommended are in keeping with the guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, other federal agencies, and the Belmont Report” (University of Arkansas, 2021).

Another consideration prior to conducting the study was the necessity to adhere to ethical guidelines. Researchers need to anticipate the ethical issues that may arise during their studies (Hesse-Bieber & Leavey, 2006). This was an important part of the study because research involves the collection of data from people, about people (Punch, 2005). As part of the data collection process, researchers need to protect their research participants; develop a trustworthy relationship with them; promote the integrity of research; guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organizations or institutions; and cope with new, challenging problems (Isreal & Hay, 2006).

Therefore, prior to conducting the study, I reviewed the code of ethics from several professional associations such as the American Sociological Association Code of Ethics, the American Anthropological Association's Code of Ethics, and the American Educational Research Association Ethical Standards. I also sought consultation from the University of Arkansas's Office of Research Compliance (RSCP) regarding the various approvals and permissions that I obtained from my academic institution, research sites, and participants, as well as other individuals or entities.

Each research study participant received an email requesting their participation in the study because they were currently serving as a president at a PCU in the state of Oklahoma. See Appendix C for a copy of the email that was sent to the 10 OPCU presidents. In addition, each research study participant received an informed consent form (Appendix D) that was required for participation in the study. The contents of the informed consent form included the identification of the researcher; identification of the sponsoring institution; identification of the purpose of the study; identification of the benefits for participating in the study; identification of the level and type of participant involvement in the study; a notation of risks to the participant; a guarantee of confidentiality to the participant; an assurance that the participant can withdraw from the study at any time; and a list of names of persons to contact if questions arise (Sarantakos, 2013).

Data were collected from 7 OPCU presidents through a structured interview protocol that included open-ended interview questions, prompts, and probes, which were used to collect relevant data from interview participants (Moustakas, 1994). As part of the data collection process, I made audio recordings of the interviews, and I documented the non-verbal communication displayed by the participants as they described their experiences in order to analyze the accuracy and authenticity of their statements later on during the data analysis

process. The data collection instrument contained sufficient space to make important notations regarding each question. In Appendix A, I included the interview protocol that was developed and used to collect information from participants.

Face-to-face interviews served as the primary mechanism for data collection. Although Zoom interviews were offered to presidents who could not or who were not willing to meet face to face. The interviews lasted between 45 to 60 minutes in duration, and each participant chose the time, date, and format that was most convenient for their interview. To supplement the interview process, I used the audio recordings of the interviews and journaling to keep notes on statements, cues, or ideas related to the research topic. I meticulously transcribed the audio recordings onto the interview protocol and searched for discrepancies, similarities, patterns, themes and trends.

G. Data Analysis

Data from the survey were collected, organized, prepared, interpreted and coded. According to Creswell (2009), “the process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data” (p. 183). This process involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analysis, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data (some qualitative researchers refer to this as peeling back the layers of an onion), representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009).

In terms of data analysis and interpretation an interactive approach was utilized by following Creswell’s (2009), guidelines for data analysis by emphasizing the following four-step process:

Step 1

I organized and prepared the data from the audio recordings and surveys for analysis. This step involved transcribing the interviews, optically scanning material, typing up field notes, and sorting and arranging the data into different types depending on the sources of information (Creswell, 2009).

Step 2

I read through all of the data to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning. The goal was to understand what ideas participants conveyed, as well as, acquiring a sense of the tone of the ideas. The purpose was to understand the impression of the overall depth, credibility, and use of the information. During this step, I began to document my general thoughts about the data at this stage (Creswell, 2009).

Step 3

I began the detailed analysis with a coding process. “Coding is the process of organizing the material in to chunks or segments of the text before bringing meaning to information” (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p.171). This process involved methodically reviewing the audio recording of the interviews and taking text data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences or paragraphs or images into categories, and labeling the categories with a term used in the actual language of the participant. This process used relationship and social structure codes in a traditional approach by allowing the codes to emerge during the data analysis (Creswell, 2009).

Step 4

I used the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people, as well as, categories or themes for analysis. The goal was to use the coding process to generate a small number of themes or categories. During this process, five to seven categories were created with the purpose of interconnecting themes into a story line or developing them into a theoretical model (Creswell, 2009).

Step 5

I explained how the description and themes were represented in the qualitative narrative by using a narrative passage conveying the findings of the analysis. This allowed me to make an interpretation about the meaning of the data and determine what lessons were learned in the process (Creswell, 2009).

Upon completion of the five-step process, I assessed and focused on reliability and validity. Although validation of the findings occurred throughout the steps in the process of the research, the goal was to enable the researcher to write a passage into a proposal on the procedures for validating the findings that were undertaken in the study (Creswell, 2009).

For the purpose of this study, qualitative validity means that the researcher checked for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, whereas qualitative reliability indicated that the researcher's approach was consistent across different researchers and different projects (Gibbs, 2007).

To assure my research approaches were consistent and reliable, I documented the procedures used in my case studies by developing a detailed case study protocol and database to verify my reliability procedures. Yin (2003) suggests that qualitative researchers need to document the procedures of their case studies and to document as many of the steps of the procedure as possible.

H. Chapter Summary

The chapter on research methods began with a brief re-introduction on the purpose of the study which was to examine the role of OPCU presidents in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. The philosophical assumptions and interpretative framework addressed how exploratory methodologies through a qualitative study that used an interpretation of social constructivism known as transcendental phenomenology was used in the design of the study. The sample size and case study institutions, including their roles and missions, were defined. The chapter also addressed that an interview-based questionnaire served as the research instrument. The role of researcher and a specific description of the procedures that were used in collecting data were addressed along with the data analysis procedures that were utilized to conduct the study.

Chapter IV. Findings

Oklahoma Public Comprehensive Universities (OPCUs) and their president's face many challenges. Among the top challenges facing these institutions and their leaders is the quest for adequate funding of their institutions, including adequate levels of support from state resources (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2017). Over the last decade, Oklahoma's public higher education system has found itself in an increasingly difficult situation as business and political leaders have demanded more from colleges and universities at a time when state funding has declined to its lowest level in nearly 20 years (Krehbiel, 2017). Over the past two decades, a dramatically shrinking share of the higher education budget has come from the state (Fine, 2019). In 1988, 74.2% of the budget for higher education was state appropriated dollars, but in 2019, just 27.2% of the budget came from state funding (Fine, 2019).

As a result, the rationale for focusing on OPCU presidents in the current study was based on the essential role that college presidents play in providing the necessary leadership for an institution to survive and thrive. These leadership positions are critical to the future of their institutions, and understanding their relationship with financial management and fundraising leadership skills will provide critical information to help assure these institutions have a bright future.

Therefore, the purpose for conducting the current study was to describe and examine the perceptions of OPCU presidents about their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. The focus on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising stems from rising concerns about revenue stability within the state and future forecasts that suggest additional and more challenging financial times based on decades of declining state budgets.

The current chapter begins with a chapter summary of the study; then it includes the findings of the study, the results from interviews, and data analysis. The summary of the study provided an overview of the rationale and purpose of the study, including the significance of the study, as well as the design of the study or the research methodology used to conduct the study. In addition, the results of the interviews, including a description of research study participants and the procedures used to capture data from participants' responses were provided, along with the procedures that were used by the researcher to analyze the data. The data collected were organized and presented by research question.

A. Summary of the Study

The purpose for conducting the current study was to describe and examine the perceptions of OPCU presidents about their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. The focus on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising stems from rising concerns about revenue stability within the state and future forecasts that suggest additional and more challenging financial times based on decades of declining state budgets.

The significance of this study was that it examined the president's role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising at Oklahoma's 10 PCUs. These institutions have been forced to address and adopt new, different, and critical business models to increase cash flow and limit expenditures (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2017). The pattern of declining state appropriations for higher education has created an environment in which OPCU presidents struggle to balance their budgets and provide a quality education for their students. To address those challenges, OPCU presidents have increasingly been forced to become more aggressive, creative, and involved in resource development through fundraising (Falkner, 2017).

A combination of economic effects has led to a pattern of limited funding for OPCUs (Halter, 2019; Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2021d). This has caused OPCU presidents to prioritize their roles and time in the areas of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. This is problematic because according to the ACPS 2017, in terms of use of time, OPCU presidents cited spending most of their time on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising (American Council on Education, 2017). Additionally, the study found that budgeting, financial management, and fundraising were the areas in which they typically feel most unprepared.

Another issue was that many trustees feel that they do not understand higher education finances well enough to help their institutions address budgetary challenges despite the fact that many PCU trustees have careers in business, banking, and law (Public Agenda, 2015). This is problematic because if a banker, a business CEO, and a lawyer are unable to understand higher education finances, it is unreasonable for boards to expect PCU presidents to be well-versed in those areas. Although unreasonable as it may be, this is the dilemma currently facing OPCU presidents.

The current study focused on OPCU presidents because aspiring OPCU presidents need to understand the challenges and experiences facing current and future OPCU presidents. In addition, this research provided valuable information on financial management and leadership that could be used to provide training opportunities for OPCU presidents, trustees, and the OSRHE. Furthermore, this research provided valuable information to Oklahoma's Legislators regarding fiscal decision-making with respect to Oklahoma's higher education institutions.

The design of the study was an exploratory study that examined the president's role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising at Oklahoma's 10 PCUs. Currently, there have been a limited number of studies developed regarding the role of the president in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising at PCUs. In particular, specific theories do not exist regarding the president's role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising (Satterwhite, 2004). As a result, to date, limited information and research on the president's role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising at PCUs exists. Therefore, this study explored the president's leadership role in the areas of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising because most PCU presidents do not come from a background in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, and many have little to no training in those areas, even with newly expanded responsibilities and expectations (Hartley & Godin, 2009; Nesbit et al., 2006).

Since no definite theories exist on this topic, the current study used both descriptive and exploratory methodologies in its design. The conceptual framework of this study was based on the ACPS's 2017 premise that demonstrated the need to differentiate the role and needs of university presidents at specific types of institutions, including PCUs (Jackson, 2013).

According to Fryar (2015), there are roughly 400 PCUs scattered across the U.S. and those institutions enroll nearly 70% of all undergraduate four-year students at public institutions. Despite this fact, they remain one of the least understood sectors of higher education in the U.S. Nevertheless, there have been numerous scholarly contributions to understanding PCU's on which this exploratory study builds. According to Orphan (2018), the literature on PCUs consists of five groups: (1) historical studies, (2) introductory and classificatory studies, (3) backdrop studies, (4) faculty experience studies, and (5) striving for prestige studies. This study

adds to the literature base by proposing that the literature on PCUs actually consists of six groups, and that sixth group is leadership studies.

The rationale for researching PCUs and their presidents was based on the notion that the portrait of the average president masks important differences among leaders of higher education that are reflected by the type of institution they serve (American Council on Education, 2017). Institutions vary in size, they have unique missions and purposes, and their presidents are often selected because they embody the values of, and are prepared to meet the challenges associated with, a particular type of institution (American Council on Education, 2017). As a result, presidents spend most of their careers learning about the unique opportunities and challenges facing specific kinds of institutions because they tend to come from the ranks of their own or similar institutions, which is the reason why it is important to profile presidents based on the unique traits of the institutions they lead (American Council on Education, 2017).

B. Data Collection Results from the Questionnaire

Once the research protocol was submitted and approved by the University of Arkansas IRB, data collection initially occurred by emailing all 10 of the OPCU presidents and inviting them to participate in the current study (see Appendices B and C). The list of presidents who were invited to participate are listed in alphabetical order. The following presidents were invited to participate: Cameron University (CU), East Central University (ECU), Langston University (LU), Northeastern State University (NSU), Northwestern Oklahoma State University (NWOSU), Panhandle State University (PSU), Rogers State University (RSU), Southeastern Oklahoma State University (SEOSU), Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU), and the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO).

Of the presidents who were willing to participate in the study, each one received an informed consent form (see Appendix D). The contents of the informed consent form included, the identification of the researcher; identification of the sponsoring institution; identification of the purpose of the study; identification of the benefits for participating in the study; identification of the level and type of participant involvement in the study; a notation of risks to the participant; a guarantee of confidentiality to the participant; an assurance that the participant can withdraw from the study at any time; and, a list of names of persons to contact if questions arise (Sarantakos, 2013).

Data were collected from the first five to seven OPCU presidents who replied to the email through a structured interview protocol that included open-ended interview questions, prompts, and probes which were used to collect relevant data from interview participants (Moustakas, 1994). As part of the data collection process, I made audio recordings of the interviews, and I documented the non-verbal communication displayed by the participants as they described their experiences in order to analyze the accuracy and authenticity of their statements. The data collection instrument contained sufficient space to make important notations regarding each question. See Appendix A for a copy of the interview protocol that was developed and used to collect information from participants.

Face-to-face interviews served as the primary mechanism for data collection. Zoom interviews were also offered as a format in the event that a president could not meet or would not be willing to meet face-to-face. For the current study, face-to-face interviews were conducted with all seven of the OPCU presidents who agreed to participate in the study. I audio recorded the interviews and made notes on statements, cues, or ideas related to the interview questions.

Although the interviews were planned to last between 45 to 60 minutes in duration, the interviews differed on how long they lasted. The seven interviews lasted the following minutes: (1) 67.45, (2) 62.25, (3) 65.52, (4) 57.49, (5) 65.31, (6) 63.25, and (7) 40.02. All seven of the OPCU presidents who agreed to participate in the study chose the time, date, and format that was most convenient for their interview.

Once the interviews were completed, I meticulously transcribed the audio recordings onto the interview protocol questionnaires. Then, I supplemented the transcription of the audio recordings with cues, ideas, notes, and statements that were related to each of the five interview questions and the research topic, which were documented as part of the interview process. Upon completion of that process, each interview was integrated and organized into a word processing file and hand analyzed in order to be “close to the data and have a hands-on feel to it” (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 240). In addition, I conducted a preliminary exploratory analysis (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) to explore the data, which included written memos about the information taken from the transcriptions, along with field notes that I took during each interview and the post facto interview notes that I made after the completion of each interview.

Of the ten OPCU presidents who were invited to participate in the study, seven agreed to participate in the study. Therefore, the response rate was 70% of the presidents agreed to participate in the study, or 7 out of 10 presidents agreed to participate in the study. Additional attempts to interview the other three presidents were made through two follow-up phone calls; however, those attempts were unsuccessful. Of those presidents who agreed to participate in the study, data were collected and used for the current study from all seven of the presidents who agreed to participate in the study.

The seven OPCU presidents who agreed to participate in the study had the following demographics: President A was Caucasian and female, and she was the 9th president in the university's history. She earned the distinction of being the first female to have served in the role of president at that institution. She was age 60, and her highest degree earned was a doctorate (Ph.D.) in English. She served at the same institution prior to becoming president in the role of Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. Her current tenure as president was four years. This was also her first time serving in the role of president.

President B was Caucasian and male, and he was the 21st president in the university's history. He was age 52, and his highest degree earned was a doctorate (Ph.D.) of Education in Higher Education Administration. He served at another institution prior to becoming president in the role of Vice President of Student Success and Dean of Students. His current tenure as president was 1 year and 4 months. This was his second time serving in the role of president. He had previously served as a community college president for 5 years; however, this was his first time serving as the president of a PCU.

President C was Caucasian and male, and he was the 12th president in the university's history. He was age 68, and his highest degree earned was a doctorate (Ed.D.) of Education in Higher Education Administration. He had served at another institution prior to becoming president in the role of Executive Assistant and Chief of Staff to the President. His current tenure as president was 13 years. This was his first time serving in the role of president.

President D was Caucasian and male, and he was the 7th president in the university's history. He was age 57, and his highest degree earned was a doctorate (Ph.D.) in Mathematics. He served at the same institution prior to becoming president in the role of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. His current tenure as president was 9 years. This was his first time serving in the role of president.

President E was Caucasian and male, and he was the 19th president in the university's history. He was age 59, and his highest degree earned was a doctorate (Ph.D.) of Education in Adult Learning and Higher Education. He served at another institution prior to becoming president in the role of Vice President for Administration and Finance and Executive Assistant to the President for Governmental Relations and Economic Development. His current tenure as president was 9 years. This was his first time serving in the role of president.

President F was African American and male, and he was the 16th president in the university's history. He was age 50, and his highest degree earned was a doctorate (Ph.D.) of Philosophy in Education and Human Resource Studies. He served at another institution prior to becoming president in the role of Vice President of Student Affairs. His current tenure as president was 9 years. This was his first time serving in the role of president.

President G was Caucasian and female, and she was the 19th president in the university's history. She earned the distinction of being the first female to have served in the role of president at that institution. She was age 65, and her highest degree earned was a doctorate (Ed.D.) of Education in Higher Education. She served at the same institution prior to becoming president in the role of Executive Vice President. Her current tenure as president was 15 years. This was her first time serving in the role of president.

As previously noted, an interview protocol in the form of a questionnaire (see Appendix C) was the instrument used in this exploratory research study. As a part of the interview protocol questionnaire, I decided not to disclose the identities of the seven OPCU presidents who agreed to participate in the study by noting that “your identity will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and university policy. No identifying information will be used in any report or publication resulting from this research.” As a result, the data analysis part of this section will not disclose or name any of the participants of the study. Henceforth, the study will only address the president’s comments, information, and/or statements provided in the interviews when answering the questions by addressing the quotes as coming from “this president” to protect the anonymity of the seven OPCU presidents who agreed to participate in this study.

The interview protocol questionnaire contained five questions that included relevant subdivisions or additional probing questions. The purpose of the interview protocol and of these questions and the relevant subdivisions or additional probing questions was to determine the perceptions of the seven OPCU presidents regarding their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. For the purposes of this section, the perceptions of the seven OPCU presidents were evaluated to determine what themes emerged from the interviews regarding their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. The themes that were discovered, provided conclusions and recommendations for the next chapter. The conclusions from this research were compared to the findings from the ACPS (2017) (American Council on Education, 2017).

The themes from the seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed for this study focused on patterns, similarities, and trends among the seven OPCU presidents. Therefore, the next section which was data analysis, addressed the themes that emerged from the five questions during the interviews of the 7 OPCU presidents that were conducted for the current study.

C. Data Analysis

Research Question 1: How do OPCU presidents describe their professional role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?

To answer the first question, I utilized the interview protocol (see Appendix A). To acquire a holistic answer to question one, the questionnaire asked the seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed for the current study to describe their role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. Then they were asked, what do you think you could have done to become prepared for your role in these areas?

Several other elements were included in this question. For example, I asked them to describe their previous experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, and any formal or informal training, as well as any professional affiliations they had in these areas. Another element to consider for this question was if they had any mentors or role models who contributed to their success in these areas. The following themes emerged from these questions.

Theme 1: Oversight is the President's Role in Budgeting, and Shared Governance is the President's Role in Financial Management

When asked to describe their role in budgeting and financial management, all seven of the OPCU presidents who were interviewed for the current study described their role as being heavily involved with budgeting and financial management. One president stated, "That is my area of expertise, and because of that, I am quite involved in budgeting and financial

management, but more with budgeting than financial management.” Likewise, the seven OPCU presidents seemed to mirror the latter part of this statement in that they tended to be more directly involved in the budgeting process from an oversight perspective, whereas they tended to utilize more of a shared-governance approach when it came to financial management.

As a result, all seven of the OPCU presidents mentioned meeting daily, weekly, or monthly with their Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to have input and oversight in the budgeting and financial management process. All seven of the OPCU presidents utilized shared-governance in the budgeting and financial management process. This process typically consisted of some form of budget committee that was comprised of deans, faculty, staff, and Vice Presidents. The purpose of this group was to discuss budgeting and financial management, and make recommendations to the president. For example, this president stated, “I believe in shared-governance, so at our institution we have a budget advisory committee, my (CFO) puts the bulk of the budget together with input from me, but at the end of that process, I have to agree with everything that goes into that budget because, ultimately, the Regents are going to hold me responsible for that budget.”

Therefore, all seven OPCU presidents described their role in budgeting and financial management as an oversight role and a mixture of shared-governance with their respective Boards of Regents. For example, this president stated, “At the institutional level, we meet monthly with the Board of Regents to review and make a presentation of where we are on cash and reserves, so it’s a kind of fiduciary health check-up that occurs monthly with the Board of Regents.”

Most of the seven OPCU presidents also mentioned that from February to mid-June they were intimately involved in the budgeting process. In fact, many of them stated that during this timeframe, it tended to dominate the majority of their time and energy. As such, one president stated, “I have a significant role in budgeting, budget preparation, and planning from February through the end of June every year, and I’m never finished with the budget, but I am coming off of the time of year when it is dominating nearly everything that I do.”

All seven of the OPCU presidents described their role in relation to budgeting and financial management as being similar to that of Congress in relation to controlling the purse strings. In other words, they viewed their role as an oversight function. For example, one president stated,

In budgeting, my role is to look at the entire scope of the budget, from ENG curriculum and instruction, to auxiliary services and housing, and any third-party revenues, the general, big oversight, and then, if there are any Vice Presidents who come to me with their concerns for their particular area, it is my role to review what those concerns are, and work with them to find a resolution.

Theme 2: The President is Viewed as the Face of Fundraising for the University and/or as the Chief Fundraiser for the University

When asked to describe their role in fundraising, all seven of the OPCU presidents mentioned several generalizations associated with their role in fundraising. Many of them described their role in fundraising in the following capacity; cheerleader, deal closer, donor cultivator, donor identification, friend raising, and stewardship.

A common theme that emerged from this question from all seven of the OPCU presidents was that the president was and should be viewed as the face of fundraising or the number one fundraiser for the university. For example, this president’s statement is reflective of many of the statements made by the other presidents on this topic. “The president should be the number one

fundraiser in the larger gifts for the institution, others, such as, the development team or deans and faculty can do fundraising for smaller gifts, but the president should be the point person for major donors and donations, because fundraising is based on relationships.”

Another common theme that emerged from this question from all seven of the OPCU presidents was that the president should be the chief fundraiser for the university. In fact, this sentiment was reminiscent among the comments made by several of the presidents, with one in particular remarking, “We have a staff that do fundraising and set the stage and work towards executing the plan for fundraising, but ultimately, I am the chief fundraiser for the institution who sets the philosophy and culture of fundraising, my chief role is to be involved to the extent that I go in and close the deal.”

Another element of this question was to ask the seven OPCU presidents about their previous experiences in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. Prior to becoming a president, two of the OPCU presidents served as the senior executives in Academic Affairs in the role of Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. Two of the OPCU presidents served as the senior executives in Student Affairs, with one them serving in the role of Vice President of Student Success and Dean of Students, and the other serving as the Vice President of Student Affairs. One of the OPCU presidents served as the Executive Assistant to the President, and two of the OPCU presidents served as Chief Financial Officers (CFOs), with one of them serving in the role of Vice President for Administration and Finance and Executive Assistant to the President for Governmental Relations and Economic Development, and the other serving in the role of Executive Vice President.

Since this aspect of question number one directly correlated with question number three and question number four more detailed information and themes will be provided in those two questions regarding their previous experiences in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

Theme 3: Most Presidents Relied Upon Informal and On-the-Job Training Regarding Budgeting, Financial Management, and Fundraising

Another element of this question was to ask the seven OPCU presidents about their formal and informal education and training and professional affiliations in these areas. The diversity of experience among the presidents regarding formal and informal training and professional associations in these areas ranged from no to little formal training or informal training and professional associations in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising to extensive experience with formal or informal training and professional associations in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

Although some of the seven OPCU presidents had formal and informal experience and professional associations in either budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, most had some experience with the budgeting and financial management, but most did not have experience with fundraising as can be seen in the following paragraphs that discussed their perceived formal and informal training, as well as their participation in professional associations.

President A stated, “I had no real formal education or training in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, so I learned on the job and worked closely with alumni, bankers, business and industry, and donors, and I hired an executive coach to strengthen my background in those areas.” Most of this president’s training came from on-the-job training. In terms of professional associations, this president participated in the American Association of State

Colleges and Universities' (AASCU's) Council of Presidents. This president mentioned the Higher Learning Commission, the RUSO Presidents Council, and the Council of Presidents in the state of Oklahoma as being beneficial to their professional development in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

President B had some formal education and training. This president mentioned that their professional education and training was comprised of attending a week-long summer institute for fundraising in California, and this president attended the Harvard Institute for Experienced Presidents. This president served on the alumni board of their undergraduate institution and was a graduate assistant for the athletic department during graduate school. This president noted that, "surrounding yourself with subject matter experts and building strong relationships with people who have a background in or who work with budgeting, financial management, and fundraising was very beneficial." In terms of professional associations, this president served as the former Chair of the President's Summer Academy for the Association of American Community Colleges (AACC). This president also found the RUSO Presidents Council and the Council of Presidents in the state of Oklahoma to be beneficial in learning more about budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

President C had little to no formal education or training in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. This president stated, "Most of my experience came from informal training through on the job training working with professional fundraisers at my previous institution and this institution, and working with colleagues through the RUSO Presidents Council and the Council of Presidents in the state of Oklahoma." This president also noted that their previous background in politics was beneficial to their role in budgeting and financial management, but in particular, it was beneficial to their role in fundraising. In terms of

professional associations, this president mentioned the Oklahoma Academy, the RUSO Presidents Council, and the Council of Presidents in the state of Oklahoma.

President D had no formal education or training in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. This president stated, “I looked over people’s shoulders and informally watched them, I did on-the-job training, watching people locally in business and industry, and I read articles and books on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, but I had a difficult time finding any literature on fundraising.” In terms of professional associations, this president attended the AASCU New Presidents Academy and the Higher Learning Commission’s annual meeting and acquired some professional development opportunities in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. This president also mentioned the Board of Regents and their professional backgrounds and experiences as being a beneficial source to learn from, as well as the RUSO Presidents, and the Council of Presidents in the state of Oklahoma.

President E had lots of formal education and training in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. This president stated, “I took at the undergraduate level several accounting classes and I understood amortization, how to build financial statements, audits, and I was a Program Coordinator and Endowed Chair, so I was responsible for a lot of grants for a lot of money.” This president’s previous experience as the CFO or Vice President for Administration and Finance and Executive Assistant to the President for Governmental Relations and Economic Development and their experience serving as the Secretary of the Foundation gave this president tremendous experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. In terms of professional associations, this president attended AASCU’s New Presidents Academy, and this president teaches two courses for the academy. For the state of Oklahoma, this president previously served on the Council of Business Officers (COBO) and served on the National

Association of State College Business Officers. This president also mentioned the RUSO Presidents Council and the Council of Presidents in the state of Oklahoma.

President F had little formal education or training in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. This president mentioned, “Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI) had a fundraising school and I attended their week long institute and I received a certificate, so I learned enough to be dangerous, I knew some of the differences between foundation work versus corporate, and I understood how use wealth finders.” Most of this president’s experience was on-the-job training and relying on his previous experiences. In terms of professional associations, this president also mentioned the RUSO Presidents Council and the Council of Presidents in the state of Oklahoma.

President G had extensive formal education and training in budgeting and financial management. This president had a formal undergraduate education in business education and is a certified public accountant (CPA). This president also had experience as the CFO and as the Executive Vice President, with numerous years of experience in budgeting and financial management prior to becoming president. This president had no formal education or experience in fundraising. All of this president’s experience in this area came from on-the-job training. This president stated, “I really didn’t have much experience in fundraising. Up until I became President, we didn’t do a lot of fundraising; in fact, we had never done a capital campaign as an institution.” In terms of professional associations, this president mentioned that they attended the Business Management Institute at the University of Kentucky, which is a three-year program for a couple of weeks each year in the summer. This president also attended the Institute of Executive Management (IEM) at Harvard and the AASCU New Presidents Academy. For the state of Oklahoma, this president previously served on the Council of Business Officers (COBO)

and was a graduate of Leadership Oklahoma. This president also mentioned the RUSO Presidents Council and the Council of Presidents in the state of Oklahoma.

The last element of question one asked the seven OPCU presidents if they had any mentors or role models who contributed to their success in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. All seven of them mentioned one or more colleagues, mentors, or role models who contributed to their success. All seven of them also mentioned their previous university president as some type of mentor or role model, and most mentioned that person as being instrumental in their decision to become and pursue a presidency themselves. One president noted, “I worked for three presidents here prior to becoming president, and I learned what to do and what not to do from all three of them, and each one of them brought particular strengths and weaknesses, so it was good for me to see different styles of leadership.” Several of the OPCU presidents mentioned cabinet members and/or Vice Presidents as being mentors and role models. Several of the OPCU presidents mentioned alumni, Boards of Regents, and business and industry members, but in particular, they mentioned bankers and people who worked in finance, as well as donors, as being mentors or role models. Additionally, all seven of the OPCU presidents mentioned either the RUSO presidents or the Council of Presidents in the state of Oklahoma as being either colleagues, mentors, or role models. All of these groups had a positive influence in their role as president in the areas of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

The seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed and answered the first question described their professional role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising in a variety of ways. The seven OPCU presidents all stated that they were heavily involved with the budget process, especially from February through June. They were ultimately responsible for the university’s budget in their role as president, but they relied upon their respective CFOs or Vice

Presidents of Administration and Finance to create and manage the budget with input from them. Thus, they all described their role with budgeting as being primarily an oversight function.

All seven of the OPCU presidents were heavily involved in the financial management of the university, although most of them were involved to a lesser extent in financial management than they were in budgeting. Again, they all stated that they were ultimately responsible for the financial health of the university in their role as president, but they relied upon their respective CFOs or Vice Presidents of Administration and Finance and other divisional Vice Presidents and/or cabinet members to work in conjunction with some form of budget committee regarding their financial management approach. Likewise, they all met monthly with their respective Board of Regents to assess, discuss, and review the overall financial health of their university. Thus, they all described their role with financial management as being primarily one of shared governance.

All seven of the OPCU presidents were heavily involved in fundraising for the university. As the CEO and face of the university, all seven of the OPCU presidents viewed themselves as the chief fundraiser and the face of fundraising for the university. As a result, the seven OPCU presidents viewed their role in fundraising to be multi-dimensional: they acted as cheerleader, deal closer, donor cultivation, donor identification, friend raising, and stewardship. In particular, their role in fundraising was to be the point person for major donors and gifts.

The seven OPCU presidents also described their professional role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising as relying upon a combination of informal and on-the-job training. Most of the OPCU presidents relied upon informal and on-the-job training to strengthen their knowledge and role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. This was especially the case with fundraising, as only two of the seven OPCU presidents had a background and

experience with fundraising, so informal and on-the-job training was their major source of experience and learning in the role of fundraising as president.

OPCU presidents described their professional roles in the financial areas of leadership as being comprehensive in nature, they were expected to be the primary leaders in fundraising, and all of them learned about the financial areas of PCU leadership and acquired their financial management skills while on-the-job.

Research Question 2: What personal and professional characteristics do OPCU presidents describe or perceive as necessary for effectiveness in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?

To answer the second question, I utilized the interview protocol shown in Appendix A. To acquire a holistic answer to question two, the questionnaire asked the seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed for the current study, what personal and professional characteristics as president do you perceive are necessary to be competent in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?

Several other elements were included in this question such as personal and professional strengths and weaknesses. The presidents were also asked what questions they had about their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising as a president, and the presidents were asked if they felt personally and professionally prepared for their role in these areas as president.

Theme 4: Surround Yourself with Subject Matter Experts Whom You Trust

The personal characteristics that the OPCU presidents perceived were necessary to be competent in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising were being a people person, caring about people, being disciplined, being ethical, being good with your personal finances,

having integrity, relationship management, social management skills, having a strong work ethic, being trustworthy, and being able to make tough financial decisions.

The professional characteristics that the OPCU presidents perceived were necessary to be competent in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising were an affinity for numbers, an understanding of basic business principles such as a basic understanding of accounting, auditing, and how to read financial statements, a basic understanding of the components of financial management, and financial forecasting. In fact, one of the presidents stated, “You need to have a great understanding of forecasting and trends, being able to forecast revenue, and you have to be able to forecast expenses. You need to have really good people around you that you trust, making decisions that are in the best interest financially for the university.”

The personal and professional strengths of the seven OPCU presidents were covered in the two preceding paragraphs. The one caveat to these strengths is that all seven of the OPCU presidents mentioned that their personal and professional characteristics in preparation as president for their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising were strengthened in their previous role prior to becoming president and by having incremental experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. Both of these will be discussed further in questions three and four as they are themes for those respective questions.

The personal and professional weaknesses of the seven OPCU presidents were summed up into two basic principles: (1) you don’t know what you don’t know, and (2) you can’t be a subject matter expert in all of the areas that a president is responsible for, so it is critical to surround yourself with subject matter experts whom you trust. This president elaborately and eloquently summed this point up by stating:

Well, first you have got to be disciplined and be prepared to do a lot of work. Second, we are past the days where a president can say, “Well that’s the CFO’s job,” because at the end of the day, federal dollars, state dollars, appropriated dollars, those are things that can derail your career, and you can go to prison for irregularities, so I know where the buck stops! You have to be able to work hard, and you have to understand what is going on. You can’t displace it because I can assure you when I had the budget hearing with the Board of Regents last week with the CFO sitting on one side of me and the enrollment manager sitting on the other side of me, the questions were directed at me, not those people. Sure, there were things I could ask them to fill in the blanks, but you better know what you are doing and you better be able to communicate it. So you have to work hard and you can’t displace your responsibility, and I think the other thing is you have to surround yourself with people that are honest, because our primary operating budget, what we call ENG 1, is about \$91 million dollars; then there is ENG 2 and that is grants, auxiliary services, things like that, but you better have people around you that understand it, and that are honest, and willing to say to you, “Hey this is what is happening,” because things do happen, and there are good reasons why your budget missed its projections, but there are bad reasons too. I don’t stay up at night worrying about our budget. During the time when we are writing the budget, it dominates nearly all of my time, but I don’t worry about the budget. The relationship between you and the nine-member board is a trust relationship; you have to have people around you that you trust. You can’t manipulate, and you have to know if, and when, you are being manipulated. You can’t do it all. I don’t manage everything, but you better know what is going on, and you better have people around you that are competent in their areas, and that you trust.

Likewise, another president affirmed the value of surrounding yourself with subject matter experts whom you trust. As a result, this president noted,

It’s important to surround yourself with confident people who aren’t afraid to tell you no. You want loyalty, but you don’t want to surround yourself with yes people. You want to surround yourself with people who are smarter than you are, and this is especially true in the areas of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. In particular, it is especially important to do this in the areas that you lack experience in, or in areas in which your experience is weak. That is also why it is important to be a servant leader and utilize shared-governance because shared-governance allows for a diverse set of perspectives, and it allows you to cover your knowledge gaps by acquiring diverse perspectives from different subject matter experts because you can’t know everything about all of these areas.

Another element of this question asked the presidents, what questions did you have about your role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising? In terms of the questions they had regarding budgeting and financial management, one statement stood out to me. I believe this perception from the various statements and non-verbal cues to be the most accurate portrayal of

their overall questions regarding this area. Although I acknowledge that only one president explicitly asked this question, I believe that several others also implicitly asked this question.

This president stated,

The questions for me was and is finding a level of confidence and understanding in how the state funding formula works in Oklahoma. Understanding how the state funding formula works is key to understanding how the state arrives at your allocation, so you can understand what you can do as an institution to positively impact your state funding and allocations, so it's really important to know the rules of the game and understand how the game is played from a state budgeting, appropriations, and allocation process. In other words, having a complete and total understanding of the metrics and dynamics around the state appropriations process, and figuring out how we operate as a state, so we can grow, so understanding how Oklahoma funds higher education, so you are not counteractive to the budgeting and financial management process as the president of the institution.

The last element of this question asked the presidents if they felt personally and professionally prepared for their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising as president. All seven of the OPCU presidents mentioned that they felt personally prepared for their roles as president in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. Although I believed their responses to be accurate and truthful, I felt that due to their answers to the five questions and the acknowledgement by several of the OCPU presidents that they lacked experience in fundraising there was some measure of hubris to this answer. However, several presidents did mention that it was necessary to have a big ego or be highly self-confident. For example, one president stated, "You know what the Peter Principle is? Well when I first became president, that applied to me. There were times when 'I thought, I have just risen to the level of my incompetence.' You have to have a big ego, but it's amazing how much you don't know when you first become president."

All seven of the OPCU presidents implied and stated that due to a combination of their previous role prior to becoming president and due to their incremental budgeting experience, they felt at least somewhat prepared as president for their role in budgeting and financial management. Six of the seven OPCU presidents felt that they were ill-or under-prepared for their role in fundraising. The following statement from one of the presidents summed up how professionally prepared these presidents were for their role in fundraising. This president stated,

I was looking for articles and books on fundraising. I was asking, “Where are the articles and books on fundraising?” As a former professor, I had my library where I could find articles and books on a topic. I might not have it in my library, but a library somewhere out there has it, so I thought for example, if there is a technique for math or computer science it is written down somewhere. I think that was one of the questions in relation to fundraising is where is this written down, and you just haven’t told me how to find it. Then, I discovered it’s not written down anywhere, and that was kind of disheartening to me going in, trying to approach being president the same way you approached being a math major, a professor, a dean, and even as a Vice President - if you need to know something you find an expert in the field, you attend a conference, you find articles or books on the topic, but I think the learning for new presidents, in particular, in the area of fundraising did not follow that model, so I just had to find another way forward. The articles and books on fundraising were sparse, and meaningful professional development in fundraising is difficult to find. It’s not that it is not out there; it is just sparse, so initially the way I approached my role as president in fundraising was the same way that I had approached being an academic my whole life, but that didn’t work, so I had to find another way, so you know the old saying, “network, network, network.” The learning for presidents did not follow the traditional model of learning about fundraising and that was difficult for me, so I had to switch how I learned and I began to learn to network.

The seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed for the current study were asked to describe what personal and professional characteristics they describe or perceive as necessary for effectiveness in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. The personal characteristics that the seven OPCU presidents perceived were necessary to be competent in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising included being a people person, caring about people, being disciplined, being ethical, being good with your personal finances, having integrity,

relationship management, social management skills, having a strong work ethic, being trustworthy, and being able to make tough financial decisions.

Furthermore, the professional characteristics that the seven OPCU presidents perceived were necessary to be competent in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising were an affinity for numbers, an understanding of basic business principles such as a basic understanding of accounting, auditing, and how to read financial statements, a basic understanding of the components of financial management, and financial forecasting.

The seven OPCU presidents also felt that the personal and professional characteristics that they described or perceived were necessary for effectiveness in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising were delegation and trust, which were summed up into two basic principles: (1) you don't know what you don't know, and (2) you can't be a subject matter expert in all of the areas that a president is responsible for, so it is critical to surround yourself with subject matter experts whom you trust.

OPCU presidents described the personal characteristics they perceived as necessary for effectiveness in financial leadership such as being a people person, caring about people, being disciplined, being ethical, being good with your personal finances, having integrity, relationship and social management skills, having a strong work ethic, being trustworthy, and being able to make tough financial decisions. The professional characteristics were an affinity for numbers, an understanding of basic business principles such as a basic understanding of accounting, auditing, and how to read financial statements, a basic understanding of the components of financial management and financial forecasting, and the willingness to delegate. They perceived that it was improbable to have all of the personal and professional characteristics to be effective in all

of these areas so relying on subject matter experts whom you can trust was the ultimate personal and professional characteristic.

Research Question 3: How do OPCU presidents describe their prior experience with budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?

To answer the third question, I utilized the interview protocol (see Appendix A). To acquire a holistic answer to question three, the questionnaire asked the seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed for the current study, how would you describe your prior experience with budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?

Several other elements were included in this question such as personal experiences in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, as well as any friendships, social organizations, memberships in professional associations, external board service, certifications, conferences, or courses related to budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

Theme 5: Having Incremental Experience in Budgeting, Financial Management, and Fundraising Prior to Becoming President was Instrumental to their Success in These Areas

When asked how they would describe their previous experience with budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, all seven of the OPCU presidents discussed how having incremental experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising was instrumental to their success in these areas. For example, both of the presidents who had served as Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs noted that their experiences as Department Chair, Dean, Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Provost provided an incremental level of experience with budgeting and financial management. In terms of fundraising experience, both of these presidents acknowledged a lack of experience in fundraising from their incremental experience. They both felt that managing grants and having

some minimal fundraising experience in their roles as Dean and Provost provided a foundational background for fundraising. For example, this president stated,

Based on the administrative roles that I held prior to becoming president was very helpful to me in terms of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. I was a Department Chair in Computer Science and Technology, and in that role, I set the budget for computer labs, software, personnel, and expenditure of supplies and materials, so my budgeting and financial management experience was small scale. I managed 10-15 employees and associated costs. Then, I spent time as Dean of the School of Science and Technology, and I had 7 departments and 60 employees, so it was the same budget types, but for 7 different academic units, and that gave me more opportunity to learn more about budget variety. For example, I had agriculture, and that's where I learned about buying and selling cattle, renting land, cutting hay. That's not something the Chair of Computer Science does, so that's coming one step up and letting me peel the onion back one step more and that let me look at a variety of different financial transactions that I wouldn't have seen as Department Chair. Then, as Vice President of Academic Affairs, you have all of those departments from the sciences, but then you have the complexities of the fine arts, so music contracts, art studios, managing a theatre, to renting scripts. Then you have the department of business, learning about accreditations and licensures, so you get a few more wrinkles, and you are peeling back the onion even more, so that incremental growth was important. Having a chance to learn a lot about a really focused area, and then continuing to add to that, so that incremental process worked well for me. I can't imagine having gone from being a professor to being a president. I think the firehose would have been more than I could have swallowed.

Of the two presidents who served as Chief Financial Officer (CFO), one of them was the Executive Vice President of their institution prior to becoming president, and the other one was the Vice President for Administration and Finance and the Executive Assistant to the President for Governmental Relations and Economic Development at another institution prior to becoming president. Both of those presidents mentioned that having incremental experience in budgeting, financial management, and/or fundraising was beneficial. The former president noted that their experience in fundraising had occurred on-the-job at their current institution, so the incremental experience in fundraising was less significant for that president than it was for budgeting and financial management. The latter president stated,

My entire background was beneficial. I began my career in higher education as the Director of High School and College Relations; then I became a faculty member, and I rose through the ranks from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor to Full Professor, and I was an Endowed Chair. Then, I became CFO, and then I was promoted to Vice President of Administration and Finance and Executive Assistant to the President for Governmental Relations and Economic Development, and I also served as the Secretary of the Foundation. That incremental level of experience was vital to my success as president in the role of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

The two presidents who served in Student Affairs acknowledged that having incremental experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising was crucial to their success in these areas. One of them had served as the Vice President for Student Affairs at another institution prior to becoming president, and the other one had served as the Vice President for Student Success and Dean of Students at another institution prior to becoming president. In fact, the former president stated, “The positions I have served in from being an Assistant Director to being a Dean of Student Affairs and being responsible for the oversight of a department to being a Vice President of Student Affairs and having oversight over an entire division, that incremental experience was very helpful to me in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.”

Another element of this question asked the seven OPCU presidents about their personal experiences in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. All seven of the OPCU presidents discussed their personal experiences in relation to their professional experiences. Likewise, all seven of the OPCU presidents discussed having an incremental level of experience, and they mentioned their previous role prior to becoming president as having been the most influential factors personally in preparing them as president for their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

Another viewpoint expressed by one of the presidents regarding their personal experiences with budgeting and financial management was that the management of their personal finances was critical to their success in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. This president believed, “The person who wants to become a president in my view should be able to handle their own personal finances in a very good manner. I believe that most people philosophically and operationally handle the budgets they have at work, in a similar way to the budgets they have at home.”

Theme 6: Friend Raising, Presidential Colleagues, and Shared-Experiences are an Invaluable Part of the President’s Role in Budgeting, Financial Management, and Fundraising

This question also asked if any friendships, social organizations, or memberships in professional associations were beneficial as president in their roles of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. In terms of friendships, all seven of the OPCU presidents mentioned that friend raising was critical to donor cultivation and fundraising. As a result, one president noted, “Most large gifts are based upon relationships, so friend raising and the relationships you build with donors are the key to fundraising and establishing major gifts.”

For all seven of the OPCU presidents, the Council of Presidents in the state of Oklahoma, and the formal meetings and informal meetings with the regional university presidents were viewed as being an invaluable part of their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. This was due to their shared experiences of serving in the role as president of a higher education institution in the state of Oklahoma. Therefore, one of the presidents stated,

For me, I would say its colleagues. The Council of Presidents meets monthly, and I would say that colleague base has been the number one help. To have a chance to sit down once a month, to sit down with presidents from the flagships, regionals, and community colleges. Then within that, the informal meetings with the regional university presidents have been very beneficial. It provides an opportunity for sharing because if they are having an issue, then you know it's coming to your campus soon, and you are going to have that issue. I think the other colleague, friend group, comes from the civic organizations that you get to have a seat on because you are president. I am the Ex Officio Officer of the Chamber of Commerce, and I sit on the Economic Development Corporation Board, so it gives you access to the executives for other industries in your communities, and I have found that very helpful because those CEOs are facing the same types of issues we are in higher education, and those have been great relationships.

Furthermore, this question asked if external board service, certifications, conferences, or courses were beneficial as president in their roles of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. Similar to the previous answer, six of the seven OPCU presidents mentioned having external board service. One president noted, "I serve on a bank board, and I sought that experience out for strengthening my financial management skills." The Chamber of Commerce appeared to be the preferred mode of external board service although many other entities and institutions were mentioned. All seven of the OPCU presidents mentioned acquiring certifications, attending conferences, or taking courses in relation to budgeting and financial management in their current role as president. Six of the seven OPCU presidents mentioned pursuing certifications, conferences, or courses in fundraising in their current role as president.

Most of the OPCU presidents tended to pursue certifications, conferences, and courses in search of more information and to gain expertise in fundraising, with budgeting and financial management being secondary. In fact, one president stated, "I pursued a certificate in fundraising through Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), so I learned enough from that to be dangerous in fundraising, and then I attended Harvard's Institute for New Presidents and one of the courses I took was on fundraising." A common issue reported by several of the OPCU presidents related to pursuing certifications, conferences, courses, or other formal

learning opportunities was that they believed and viewed the opportunities to learn more about fundraising through formal education to be scarce. In fact, several of them felt that there were not many articles, books, certifications, conferences, or courses related to fundraising. Similarly, several of them felt, although to a lesser extent, that the formal learning opportunities on budgeting and financial management in higher education were scarce.

The seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed for the current study were asked how they would describe their prior experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. When asked about how they would describe their prior experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, all seven of the OPCU presidents discussed to a varying degree how having incremental experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising was instrumental to their success in these areas.

All seven of the OPCU presidents mentioned that having incremental experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising was instrumental to their success. In particular, they felt that having incremental experience in budgeting and financial management was vital to their success, because they all had incremental experience in budgeting and financial management. Having incremental experience in fundraising was viewed as less significant to their success because several of the OPCU presidents mentioned that they had either no prior experience with fundraising prior to becoming president or they had little incremental experience in fundraising prior to becoming a president.

OPCU presidents described their prior experience in financial leadership as occurring in an incremental fashion, this was less significant of a factor in fundraising because most of them either had no or little experience in this area prior to becoming a president so shared experiences with the other 25 college and university presidents in the state of Oklahoma shaped their experience.

Research Question 4: How do OPCU presidents perceive their previous experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising has contributed to their current and future success in these areas?

To answer the fourth question, I utilized the interview protocol in Appendix A. To acquire a holistic answer to question four, the questionnaire asked the seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed for the current study, how do you perceive your previous experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising has contributed to your current and future success in these areas?

Theme 7: On-the-Job Training and their Previous Role Prior to Becoming President were Crucial to their Success as President in the Roles of Budgeting, Financial Management, and Fundraising

When asked how they perceive their previous experience with budgeting, financial management, and fundraising has contributed to their current and future success in these areas, all seven of the OPCU presidents stated that on-the-job training and their previous role prior to becoming president were crucial to their success in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. Therefore, this president stated, “My previous background was very beneficial, but on-the-job training in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising is invaluable and it

helps you weather the storms and it helps you deal with future challenges, especially the financial challenges due to declining state appropriations and issues like COVID-19.”

Most of the OPCU presidents noted that on-the-job training was instrumental to their success in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. Despite this fact, six of the seven OPCU presidents noted that the vast majority of their experience in fundraising came from on-the-job training, and several of them noted that the learning curve was steep for them. For example, one president stated,

Prior to becoming president, I had no real fundraising experience, so that occurred almost entirely on the job as president, so I feel like that is one of my weaker areas because I don't have enough experience with it. As a result, I don't really feel comfortable with asking for large donations, so for me the learning curve has been steep with fundraising.

Likewise, another president discussed their fundraising experience as being holistically comprised of on-the-job training by noting,

Due to my background in budgeting and financial management as the former CFO and Executive Vice President of the university, I had a much stronger background in budgeting and financial management than most presidents do, but I didn't have a background or any real experience in fundraising, because our university didn't do a lot of fundraising. We had never done a capital campaign before I became president. In fact, all of our fundraising efforts had focused more on bequests and wills and that type of thing, so I had to really learn about the fundraising role while serving as the president, so it was learning on-the-job.

Similarly, all seven of the OPCU presidents felt that their previous role prior to becoming president proved to be the most useful in terms of preparation for the presidency in the role of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. In particular, one president remarked,

My prior experience and role as Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and as the Vice President of Administration and Finance at my previous institution was important to have prior to becoming president regarding budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. I was very fortunate to have worked for the same president for 19 years of the 22 years that I worked at my previous institution. He was masterful at fundraising, and he was my mentor. As he got older, I traveled with him to secure federal dollars and donation dollars, and I was kind of the detail person for him. It became my job to tee it up and fill in the blanks, but he was the deal closer. I was fortunate to have some exposure to

fundraising, federal dollars, state dollars, and I was also the Executive Assistant to the President for Governmental and Community Relations. I also had a fundraising role, but I can assure you that without that, without the budgeting, financial management, and fundraising experience, it would have been very difficult. For example, we are currently working on a big federal grant; we are working on a new building for Optometry because it's in an 85 year old neglected hospital, and that project may well include new market tax credits. I'm working on a tax credit deal. We are talking with the feds; we are talking about HARP funds and tribal funds. When people are thinking about fundraising, they are typically thinking about just going and talking to donors - no, no, no, it's how can we get \$5 million dollars? Is the project eligible for \$5 million dollars in new market tax credits? And sitting down with the different tribal leaderships and saying, "We predominately serve the Choctaws, Creeks, Cherokees, and a few Chickasaws. How do we have conversations with the five tribes and how does that work?" In addition, the state of Oklahoma is going to get 1.6 billion dollars in America Recovery program funding, so it's much more than just talking to a donor; it's all of the above: it's writing grants. At my previous institution, I was the secretary of the foundation, so I had been directly involved in two large fundraising campaigns, and I had a president that was a mentor. He was very thoughtful, so as the Secretary of the foundation, I knew all of the workings, the ins and outs of a foundation (501C).

All seven of the OPCU presidents felt that their previous role prior to becoming president proved to be the most useful in terms of preparation for the presidency in their roles of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. In particular, they felt that their previous role prior to becoming president was crucial to their success in fundraising. In fact, one of the presidents remarked,

Fundraising was a big change for me, because as Department Chair and Dean, fundraising was primarily baby bird. You just whined to the upper administration, "Feed me, I need more money." I would say my role as fundraiser as Department Chair and Dean was more as a grant writer. In those roles, when I asked for money, it would have been to the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institute of Health (NIH), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), so it was selling your science: here is what we can do, selling your investment. I had no experience taking that and going to someone locally and trying to get a gift. There is a differentiation between gifts and grants. I would say as Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs is when that began to transition, and that was thanks to the previous president. We were in the middle of a capital campaign and we were coming up on the university centennial, and the way she did it was all hands on deck, so the opportunity for me to really learn about fundraising occurred as she was making major asks from donors. She would take a subject matter expert with her for those asks during that campaign, and since she was raising money for computer science, and since I had a background in computer science, I got to go with her as the subject matter expert. That allowed me to sit in the room and

observe her. I got to watch her cultivate that donor and make that ask, so it was learning by watching. The transition began from fundraising as grant writing, to fundraising as donor investment in the university, or in a project at the university in my role as Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs.

The seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed for the current study were asked, how do they perceive their previous experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising has contributed to their current and future success in these areas? When asked how they perceived their previous experience with budgeting, financial management, and fundraising has contributed to their current and future success in these areas, all seven of the OPCU presidents mentioned that on-the-job training and their previous role prior to becoming president were crucial to their success in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

All seven of the OPCU presidents felt that their previous role prior to becoming president proved to be the most beneficial in terms of preparation for the presidency in their roles of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. In particular, they felt that their previous role prior to becoming president was crucial to their success in fundraising. Likewise, six of the seven OPCU presidents noted that the majority of their experience in fundraising came from on-the-job training, and several of them noted that the learning curve was steep for them when it came to learning about fundraising. Therefore, on-the-job training and their previous role prior to becoming president were both beneficial to their success in the roles of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. Despite this fact, on-the-job training was the most important factor in preparing these presidents for their role in fundraising. This was due to the fact that most of them had no or little experience in fundraising prior to serving as president.

OPCU presidents perceived their previous experience in the financial areas of leadership contributed to their current and future success because they acquired valuable on-the-job training and learned financial management skills, particularly in fundraising through their previous role prior to becoming president which strengthened their ability to be successful in these areas.

Research Question 5: How much of their time do OPCU presidents perceive they spend on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?

To answer the fifth question, I utilized the interview protocol (see Appendix A). To acquire a holistic answer to question five, the questionnaire asked the seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed for the current study, how much of your time do you perceive you spend on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?

Several other elements were included in this question such as do they spend a proportional amount of time in these areas, as well as trying to understand which area they spend the most time on, and why, and trying to understand how they determine what is the best use of their time.

Theme 8: Among their Duties, Roles, and Responsibilities, OPCU Presidents Spend Most of their Time on Budgeting, Financial Management, and Fundraising

All seven of the OPCU presidents stated that among their duties, roles, and responsibilities, they spend most of their time on a combination of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. As a result, one president stated,

I spend too much time on budgeting and financial management. Quite honestly, it's too much time. I spend a lot of time on budgeting and financial management during a year; at least 50% of my time goes to these areas. Then, I spend a significant amount of the rest of my time on donor relations and fundraising.

On the topic of how much time OPCU presidents spend on these areas, this president stated, “Budgeting, financial management, and fundraising are 110% of everything I do directly or indirectly; those areas impact everything I do. Whether you are increasing revenue or spending money, it has an impact on budgeting and financial management, and anything that generates revenue for the university is fundraising, so you are always fundraising.” Additionally, this president stated, “I spend a great deal of time on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. The majority of my time is spent on friend raising, cheerleading for the university, and fundraising, however; budgeting and financial management are inadvertently tied to fundraising, so the majority of my time is spent in those areas.”

Another element of this question asked the seven OPCU presidents to consider if they spend a proportional amount of time on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, or do they spend more time on budgeting and financial management or more time on fundraising. Of the seven OPCU presidents that were interviewed for this study, three of them felt that they spend a proportional amount of time on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. As a result, this president during our discussion of this question stated,

I spend about 85-90% of my time on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, so for me it's pretty proportional. If you read any of the higher education literature about higher education finance, we are all dealing with state appropriation reductions. We are also all studying demographic shifts, I go back far enough that at one point 74% of our budget was funded by the state, now it is about 30%. I think between state appropriations reductions, demographic shifts, credit hour declines, all of those things, and the nuances of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, I think presidents spend about 85% of their time on fundraising or budgeting or worrying about the budget and financial management or doing something related to fundraising.

Of the seven OPCU president who were interviewed for this study, three of them felt that they spend more of their time on budgeting and financial management then they do on fundraising. For example, one of the presidents I interviewed for this study remarked,

I would say about 65% of my time is spent on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, so it is a lot of what I do daily, weekly, and monthly. I would say the time I spend on budget and financial management is more than on fundraising, but I could argue that everything I do is fundraising. You never get enough scholarship dollars these days. I also think it depends on the time of the year. During certain times of the year, I spend more time on budgeting and financial management, and sometimes I spend more time on fundraising. However, because fundraising impacts budgeting and financial management, I would argue to a degree that they are interrelated. Overall, I would say I spend more time on budgeting and financial management, but again, to a degree, everything I do is related to fundraising.

Of the seven OPCU president who were interviewed for this study, one of them felt that they spend more of their time on fundraising then they do on budgeting and financial management. For example, that president discussed their use of time in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising this way.

I spend a great deal of my time on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, however; the majority of my time is spent collectively on friend raising and cheerleading for the university, so fundraising takes up the majority of my time. Overall, fundraising takes up most of my time, then financial management, and next is budgeting.

Furthermore, the president who stated that they felt that they spend more time on fundraising than on budgeting and financial management had some interesting commentary on this topic. Ironically, although that president felt that they spend more time on fundraising than on any other area, that same president highlighted the overall importance of the role of budgeting and financial management. While I believe the president's answer was accurate and truthful, I found it interesting that this president believed that they spend most of their time on fundraising. While this president had a strong fundraising background prior to becoming president, I found

the following commentary by this president to be fascinating in our discussion of this question.

This president mentioned,

I generally don't allow anyone to make big purchases or commit the University to major financial obligations without involving the (CFO) and myself, and from there we take it to the budget advisory committee. In the course of my career as president, I have found that financial management is so important, because nothing will cause you more harm as president or to be short lived than to have budget or financial problems. If something goes wrong with the finances or the budget that's on your watch. The Higher Learning Commission and the State Regents look at your financial integrity and good financial integrity also keeps you out of the media. You want positive news, especially financial news coming out about your university. You can't have problems with budgets and finances, the financial integrity of the institution is the most important thing to monitor. Financial integrity is vital, you owe it to your donors to be as financially frugal as possible. You have a moral and ethical duty to spend tax dollars ethically.

Theme 9: It Depends on the Time of Year as to How Much Time Each OPCU President Spends on Budgeting, Financial Management, and Fundraising

In terms of understanding how they spend most of their time, and why they spend most of their time the way they do regarding budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, a common theme exists among all seven of the OPCU presidents who were interviewed for this study. It depends on the time of year as to how much time they spend in these areas. The rationale for determining how much time to spend on budgeting and financial management versus fundraising was situational and predominately driven by the time of year. Specifically, the rationale for when they spend a more significant amount of their time on budgeting was driven primarily by the legislative infrastructure and legal mandates to meet budgeting deadlines that occur in May and June. This rationale is reflected in the comment made by the following president,

I am very much involved in the budgeting process from starting in February with the different budget discussions and meeting with the budget oversight committee, to talking with student government, staff council, and faculty council about different things and different scenarios. As far as what happens as a matter of practice, we receive our appropriation allocation on the last Friday of May and that coincides with the statutory signing deadline with the Oklahoma legislature to be out of session. That means we get our budget allocation on the Friday before Memorial Day weekend, and then, the budget has to be completed somewhere around June 9th or 10th. So, literally, the (CFO) and myself are here 12 hours a day during those couple of weeks. There are different roles that each of us play, but all of my time is spent on budget stuff, especially in that window, and then after that there is the public process where there are two hearings in which I have to participate and the last of those is in June. So, again, I have a significant role in budgeting, budget preparation, and planning from February through the end of June every year, and managing the budget during that timeframe.

During my interviews regarding this specific aspect of the question another president commented, “That depends on the time of year, I would say during May and June budgeting feels like it takes up half of my time, I know it’s not, but certainly half of my mental energy goes into how do you build a budget for the next year. Then, once I get past May and June its always there, but I would say once I am past June it takes up about 10% of my time.”

The seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed for the current study were asked, how much of their time do they perceive they spend on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising? When asked how much of their time do they perceive they spend on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, all seven of the OPCU presidents stated that among their duties, roles, and responsibilities, they spend most of their time on a combination of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

Of the seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed for this study, three of them felt that they spend a proportional amount of time on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. In addition, of the seven OPCU presidents, three of them felt that they spend more time on budgeting and financial than on fundraising, and one of them felt that they spend more time on fundraising than on budgeting and financial management. Thus, most of them feel that

they spend more time on budgeting and financial management than on fundraising; however, this was situational in that it depended on the time of year as to how much time they spend on budgeting and financial management versus fundraising.

OPCU presidents described how much of their time they perceived they spend on financial leadership, they spend most of their time on budgeting and financial management followed closely by fundraising, overall; they spend more time on budgeting and financial management than on fundraising, but this was situational, sometimes they spend more time on budgeting and financial management than on fundraising and vice-versa.

D. Chapter Summary

The chapter provided a summary of the study that focused on the five questions with the purpose of describing and examining the perceptions of OPCU presidents about their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. The seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed for the current study provided the appropriate data to answer each of the study's research questions. Overall, the seven OPCU presidents identified nine themes from the five research questions.

The following nine themes were identified from the five research questions: (1) oversight is the president's role in budgeting, and shared governance is the president's role in financial management, (2) the president is viewed as the face of fundraising for the university and/or as the chief fundraiser for the university, (3) most presidents relied upon informal and on-the-job training regarding budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, (4) surround yourself with subject matter experts whom you trust, (5) having incremental experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising prior to becoming president was instrumental to their success in these areas, (6) friend raising, presidential colleagues, and shared-experiences are an invaluable

part of the president's role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, (7) on-the-job training and their previous role prior to becoming president was crucial to their success as president in the roles of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, (8) among their duties, roles and responsibilities, OPCU presidents spend most of their time on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising, (9) it depends on the time of year as to how much time each OPCU president spends on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

Chapter V. Conclusions, Recommendations, and Discussion

The current study described and examined the perceptions of Oklahoma public comprehensive university presidents regarding their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. The rationale for focusing on OPCU presidents was based on the essential role that college presidents play in providing the necessary leadership for an institution to survive and thrive which is critical to the future of these institutions. Therefore, understanding the roles OPCU presidents play regarding financial management and fundraising leadership skills will provide critical information to help assure these institutions have a bright future.

The chapter includes the summary of the study, which focuses on the five research questions the study sought to answer. There are seven conclusions that were made about the study. There are six recommendations for practice for current and future OPCU presidents, OSRHE, and the Boards of Regents or trustees. There are also six recommendations for further research, and a discussion that focuses on higher education leadership in the role of president at an Oklahoma PCU.

A. Summary of the Study

The purpose for conducting the study was to describe and examine the perceptions of OPCU presidents about their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. A pattern of declining state appropriations for higher education has created an environment in which OPCU presidents struggle to balance their budgets while providing a quality education for their students. This has caused them to prioritize their roles and time in these areas which is problematic, because in terms of use of time, they cited spending most of their time on these areas; however, these are the areas in which they typically feel most unprepared (ACPS, 2017).

The summary of the study discusses the research questions the study sought to answer. The results of the research questions came from the responses of the seven OPCU presidents who agreed to participate in the current study. As part of the data collection process, I made audio recordings of the interviews, and I documented the non-verbal communication displayed by the participants as they described their experiences in order to analyze the accuracy and authenticity of their statements. The data collection instrument contained sufficient space to make important notations regarding cues, ideas, or statements made by the participants related to each question. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with all seven of the OPCU presidents who agreed to participate in the study.

Research Question 1: How do OPCU presidents describe their professional role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?

OPCU presidents provide comprehensive financial leadership, they act as the primary leader in fundraising and they acquired these skills on-the-job.

Research Question 2: What personal and professional characteristics do OPCU presidents describe or perceive as necessary for effectiveness in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?

OPCU presidents described many personal and professional characteristics but their ability to be effective relied upon subject matter experts whom they thought they could trust.

Research Question 3: How do OPCU presidents describe their prior experience with budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?

OPCU presidents experience with financial leadership was incremental, they had no or little experience in fundraising prior to becoming a president so shared experiences with colleagues shaped their experience.

Research Question 4: How do OPCU presidents perceive their previous experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising has contributed to their current and future success in these areas?

OPCU presidents acquired financial management skills while on-the-job and through their previous roles, particularly in fundraising, allowing them to be successful financial leaders.

Research Question 5: How much of their time do OPCU presidents perceive they spend on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?

OPCU presidents spend most of their time on budgeting and financial management followed closely by fundraising but this was situational.

B. Conclusions

1. The OPCU presidents were heavily involved in budgeting, especially from February through June. They were also heavily involved in financial management, but to a lesser extent than in budgeting. While they were ultimately responsible for budgeting and financial management, they relied upon their budgeting committees and CFOs to create the budget and engage in financial management with input and oversight from them. They all met daily, weekly or monthly with either the Board of Regents, budgeting committee, or CFO to assess, discuss, and review the overall financial health of their university. They described their role with financial management as shared governance. They were also heavily involved in fundraising. They viewed themselves as the chief fundraiser, face of the university, and point person for major donors and gifts.

2. The OPCU presidents relied upon a combination of informal and on-the-job training to gain professional experience in either budgeting, financial management, or fundraising. In particular, this was the case with fundraising, as only two of the seven OPCU presidents had a background and experience with fundraising. Informal and on-the-job training was the major source of experience and learning in the role of fundraising as president.
3. The personal characteristics that OPCU presidents perceived were necessary to be competent in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising included being a people person, caring about people, being disciplined, being ethical, being good with your personal finances, having integrity, relationship management, social management skills, having a strong work ethic, being trustworthy, and being able to make tough financial decisions. The professional characteristics that OPCU presidents perceived were necessary to be competent in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising were an affinity for numbers, an understanding of basic business principles, such as, a basic understanding of accounting, auditing, and how to read financial statements, a basic understanding of the components of financial management, and financial forecasting, and the ability or willingness to delegate.
4. The OPCU presidents acknowledged that most of them do not have a background in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. While some of the OPCU presidents had a background in either budgeting, financial management, or fundraising, most did not have a background in all three areas. Therefore, delegation and trust were essential personal and professional characteristics to have as president because they can't be a

subject matter expert in all of the areas that a president is responsible for, so they felt that it was critical to surround themselves with subject matter experts whom they trust.

5. The OPCU presidents discussed how having incremental experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising was instrumental to their success in these areas. In particular, they felt that having incremental experience in budgeting and financial management was vital to their success because they all had incremental experience in budgeting and financial management. Having incremental experience in fundraising was viewed as less significant to their success because several of them either had no prior experience with fundraising prior to becoming president or they had little incremental experience in fundraising prior to becoming a president.
6. The OPCU presidents mentioned that their previous role prior to becoming president was crucial to their success in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. In particular, they perceived their previous role prior to becoming president as being crucial to their success in fundraising. Most of the OPCU presidents noted that the majority of their experience in fundraising came from on-the-job training. On-the-job training and their previous role prior to becoming president were both beneficial to their success in the roles of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. On-the-job training was the most important factor in preparing them for their role in fundraising. This was due to the fact that most of them had no or little experience in fundraising prior to serving as president.

7. The OPCU presidents stated that among their duties, roles, and responsibilities, they spend most of their time on a combination of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. Of the seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed for the current study, three of them felt that they spend a proportional amount of time on these areas, and three of them felt that they spend more time on budgeting and financial management than on fundraising, and one of them felt that they spend more time on fundraising than on budgeting and financial management. Most of them felt that they spend more time on budgeting and financial management than fundraising. This was situational in that it depended on the time of year as to how much time they spend on budgeting and financial management versus fundraising.

C. Recommendations

Recommendations for Practice

1. The presidents of OPCUs spend a significant amount of time engaging with State Legislators attempting to gain more funding for their institutions; however, this strategy appears to be ineffective in increasing state tax-based support for their institutions and higher education. Perhaps a better strategy would be to focus on explaining the university's economic impact and social value in terms of return on investment and positive contributions that these institutions bring to cities, local communities, legislators' districts, and the state of Oklahoma.

2. The Boards of Regents and the presidents of OPCUs need to diversify their funding options by focusing more on public-private partnerships and increasing funding through capital campaigns, grants, contracts, and private gifts, and focus less on increasing tuition and fees, and passing the costs and financial burden on to students and their families.
3. Since the presidents of OPCUs spend most of their time on budgeting and financial management, and because the largest source of revenue for these institutions is based on enrollment and retention, perhaps it would be prudent for OPCU presidents to spend a proportional amount of time in the areas of budgeting, enrollment management, financial management, and fundraising.
4. The Boards of Regents for OPCUs and the presidents of OPCUs in conjunction with the OSRHE and State Legislators need to prioritize the ability of PCUs to increase their enrollment capability and Oklahoma's degree-completion rate by reinvesting in areas such as increasing course sections of classes in online and traditional formats in degree programs that are relevant to business and industry throughout the region, increasing the number of faculty and staff, especially those that contribute to the retention of students, increasing funding for maintenance, modernization, and upkeep of facilities, and exploring ways to reduce tuition and fees, and the financial burden on families.
5. The Boards of Regents for OPCUs and the Council of Presidents for the state of Oklahoma in conjunction with the OSRHE need to develop formal educational opportunities and professional development opportunities that focus on the nuances of the role of president in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising at OPCUs since these are the areas in which they spend most of their time, but often feel the least prepared.

6. The Board of Regents for OPCUs should emphasize that future OPCU presidents should have relevant higher education experience in the areas of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. This experience could be a combination of formal and informal education from various sources. For example, articles, books, certifications, conferences, courses, degrees, on-the-job training, OSHRE, presidential academies, the Departments of Education, and the Higher Learning Commission.

Recommendations for Research

1. The study can be extended to other states in the Midwest to conduct a multi-state, regional study that utilizes quantitative research methodology to compare the environmental factors of state higher education funding within the same region and their effects on the president's role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.
2. The study can employ qualitative research methodology and be extended to include all 50 states to conduct a comparative analysis to describe and examine the perceptions of PCU presidents about their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising to determine if similar or different themes emerge.
3. The study can employ qualitative research methodology to include enrollment management and describe and examine the president's perceptions about the interrelationships of their roles in budgeting, enrollment management, financial management, and fundraising.
4. The study can employ quantitative research methodology to capture a representative sample of PCU presidents and build correlations, and other quantitative research analysis can be conducted, to compare the backgrounds of PCU presidents with the time they spend in the areas of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

5. The study can employ a mixed methods methodology to build correlations and assess other environmental factors to determine why PCU presidents spend most of their time on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising since these are the areas in which they often feel the least prepared.

D. Discussion

The demographics of the seven OPCU presidents confirmed most, although not all of the findings from the ACPS (2017). While the demographic profile of the typical college or university president was slowly changing, it continued to be primarily white (83%) and male (70%) (American Council on Education, 2017). Of the seven OPCU presidents that agreed to participate in the study, all of them were Caucasian with the exception of one president who was African American. This confirms that the representation of racial and ethnic minority groups in the college presidency continue to be underrepresented (American Council on Education, 2017).

In general, men of color had greater representation than women of color at PCUs (American Council on Education, 2017). Of the seven OPCU presidents, none of them were women of color. The comparatively large proportion of PMIs headed by minorities is due in part to the concentration of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in this classification (American Council on Education, 2017). When minority serving institutions were excluded, 16% of PMIs were headed by minorities (American Council on Education, 2017). The one OPCU president who was African American reflected this statement.

Of the seven OPCU presidents that agreed to participate in the study, two were female and five were male. The two female presidents had the distinction of being the first female presidents to serve at their respective institutions. This confirms that women were

underrepresented in the college presidency, highlighting a longstanding gender gap in presidential leadership (American Council on Education, 2017).

Another popular topic in demographic trends in higher education was the graying of the presidency. The typical president in 2016 was 62 years of age, held a PhD, and had an average length of service of seven years (American Council on Education, 2017). Of the seven OPCU presidents that agreed to participate in the study, the youngest president was 50 and the oldest president was 68 with an average or median age of 59.

All seven of the OPCU presidents that agreed to participate in the study had terminal degrees with a doctorate being their highest degree earned. Two of the presidents had an (Ed.D.) and five of the presidents had a (Ph.D.). This confirms that most PCU presidents have earned a terminal degree; such as Ph.D. or Ed.D., typically in one of three disciplines; a doctorate in education, a doctorate in one of the social sciences, or a doctorate in either humanities or fine arts (American Council on Education, 2017). In terms of length of service, the ACPS (2017) found that on average, presidents of PCUs served for six years (American Council on Education, 2017). However, the average OPCU president had served for eight and half years.

The pathway to the PCU presidency was a unique journey for every individual, though there were common employment patterns (American Council on Education, 2017). For example, the vast majority of college and university presidents, including PCU presidents were established leaders in higher education with prior presidential experience and senior executive positions within academic affairs being the most common signposts on the path to the presidency (American Council on Education, 2017). The research conducted in this study found that all of OPCU presidents were established leaders in higher education. None of them had prior presidential experience at a PCU. However, one of them had prior presidential experience at a

community college. Of the seven OPCU presidents that were interviewed for this study a senior executive position within academic affairs was not the most common signpost on the path to the presidency as only two of them had held such a position prior to becoming president.

Most PCU presidents previously worked at a different institution prior to becoming president of their current institution (American Council on Education, 2017). The findings from the current study confirmed this fact; however, these findings were marginal as only four of the seven OPCU presidents had worked at a different institution prior to becoming president. Thus, PCU presidents were less likely to be hired from within the same institution (American Council on Education, 2017). Again, the findings from the current study confirmed this fact, but these findings were marginal as three of the seven OPCU presidents were hired from within the same institution. Nationally the growing percentage of presidents coming directly from another presidency suggested that boards tended to value previous presidential experience over continuity of leadership in the institution (American Council on Education, 2017). However, as previously noted none of them had prior presidential experience at a PCU.

One of the primary roles of PCU presidents was focusing on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising (American Council on Education, 2017). In terms of use of time, PCU presidents cited spending the most time on budget and financial management, with (64.9 %) of their time being focused on this area (American Council on Education, 2017). The second area in which PCU presidents cited spending most of their time on was fundraising (58.1%) (American Council on Education, 2017). The findings from the current study confirm that the majority of OPCU presidents spend most of their time on budgeting and financial management followed closely by fundraising.

According to the ACPS (2017) budgeting, financial management, and fundraising are the areas in which PCU presidents spend most of their time, but consequently, these are the areas in which they typically feel most unprepared (American Council on Education, 2017). The current study found that this was especially the case when it came to fundraising as the majority of OPCU presidents had either no or little experience in fundraising. In fact, most PCU presidents do not come from a fundraising background, and many have little to no training in this area, even with newly expanded responsibilities and expectations (Hartley & Godin, 2009; Nesbit et al., 2006).

The background of PCU presidents is critically important because while 70.1% of PCU presidents had been either a former university president, chief academic officer (provost), or senior executive in academic affairs in their immediate former position (American Council on Education, 2017). Only approximately 6% of PCU presidents came from a background as a senior executive in business and/or administration as their immediate prior position (American Council on Education, 2017). Similarly, approximately 5% of PCU presidents came from a background in institutional advancement, development, or fundraising (American Council on Education, 2017). The current study found that two of the seven OPCU presidents came from a background as a senior executive in business and/or administration as their immediate prior position and two of the seven OPCU presidents came from a background in institutional advancement, development or fundraising.

This confirms the research of Selingo et al., (2017) who found that “fundraising is essential from a president’s first day in office, but that doesn’t mean presidents are ready and willing to take on fundraising tasks, and despite the attention given to this issue over the past several years, preparing presidents to cultivate donors hasn’t improved much, if at all.” (p. 2).

Likewise, Nesbit et al., (2006) discovered that over half of the presidents surveyed from the ACPS (2007) would prefer training in fundraising than additional experience in any other single area (American Council on Education, 2007). In the interviews conducted for the current study with the seven OPCU presidents, I found that the vast majority of them stated that they would have preferred to have had more training in fundraising prior to entering into their role as president. Despite the fact that presidents spend most of their careers learning about the unique opportunities and challenges facing specific kinds of institutions because they tend to come from the ranks of their own or similar institutions this study demonstrated that the majority of OPCU presidents felt that they were underprepared in their role as president in the areas of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. This was particularly the case with fundraising.

An interesting aspect of this study was the time that OPCU presidents spend with legislators. Several of the OPCU presidents mentioned that they were shocked by the amount of time that they spend on governmental relations at the state level. I found this interesting since the ACPS (2017) identified State Legislators as the external constituent group who least understood institutional challenges (American Council on Education, 2017). PCU presidents cited spending 14.4% of their time on government relations at the state level (American Council on Education, 2017). Although PCU presidents and trustees emphasized the importance of advocating with elected officials and policymakers on behalf of their institutions as an important part of their role, nearly all stressed the difficulty of securing more funding in an era of overall lower budgets across state functions (Public Agenda, 2015). Furthermore, PCU presidents and trustees typically felt that elected officials did not understand how much higher education benefits their states economically by meeting workforce needs, attracting employers, and creating jobs (Public Agenda, 2015).

According to the ACPS 2017, public university presidents cited the revenue sources most likely to increase over the next five years were revenues from private gifts, grants, contracts, tuition and fees, and endowments (American Council on Education, 2017). At the same time, public university presidents identified revenues from state government and funds from the federal government as the sources most likely to decrease during the same time span (American Council on Education, 2017). Among public college or university presidents, PCU presidents expressed the strongest belief in a coming decline of revenues from both state governments and the federal government (American Council on Education, 2017).

Among the seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed for the current study all of them shared this sentiment. With this in mind, I found it interesting that during the interviews several presidents mentioned that they spend a significant amount of time with State Legislators advocating and lobbying for their institutions in the hopes of increasing funding for their institutions. While simultaneously acknowledging the historical trends of declining state appropriations to higher education and their institutions.

As a result, it would seem that OPCU presidents would spend their time with State Legislators advocated the financial and social benefits that their institutions bring to their legislative districts. For example, OPCU presidents could point out that for every dollar of state appropriation's invested, the state system of higher education generates \$9.40 in economic output (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021a). In addition, preparing students for careers and meeting regional workforce needs are core aspects of PCUs mission (Public Agenda, 2015). Furthermore, since PCU presidents and trustees typically encountered elected officials who were skeptical of higher education institutions because neither trustees nor their institutions provided good answers to elected officials' questions about student outcomes or how

money was spent (Public Agenda, 2015). This type of dialogue would seem to be a more constructive way of addressing this issue. Therefore, OPCU presidents and trustees need to directly address these issues by engaging in meaningful dialogue with State Legislators about student outcomes and how state appropriations are spent at their institutions and benefit the legislators' districts.

The ACPS (2017) also found that presidents chose boards of regents, local community leaders, and alumni as the three external groups that offered the most support (American Council on Education, 2021). This was interesting given that Public Agenda (2015) found that boards were often not equipped to address the challenges related to higher education and they found that presidents of PCUs felt that they contend with both disengagement and micromanagement by trustees and they felt that trustees struggled to add value because they do not fully understand their institutions' missions. In addition, Public Agenda (2015) found that the relationship between presidents and trustees was defined by a lack of trust, which was common among trustees of higher education institutions.

Among the seven OPCU presidents who were interviewed for the current study most of them indicated that the board of regents, local community leaders, and alumni were the three external groups that offered the most support to them and their institutions. Whereas most of the OPCU presidents who were interviewed felt that the boards were well equipped to address the challenges related to higher education. In fact, several of the presidents mentioned that they considered their boards to be both mentors and an important source of guidance and information in the areas of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. Therefore, the relationship between OPCU presidents and trustees appeared to be defined by collegiality, mentorship, and trust.

While there have been numerous scholarly contributions to understanding PCUs on which this exploratory study built. According to Orphan (2018) the literature on PCUs consisted of five groups: (1) historical studies, (2) introductory and classificatory studies, (3) backdrop studies, (4) faculty experience studies, and (5) striving for prestige studies. This study added to the literature base by proposing that the literature on PCUs actually consists of six groups, and that sixth group, is leadership studies. This study focused on OPCU presidents because aspiring OPCU presidents need to understand the challenges and experiences facing current and future OPCU presidents. In addition, this research provided valuable information on the leadership role of OPCU presidents in the areas of budgeting, financial management, and fundraising that could be used to provide training opportunities for OPCU presidents, trustees, and the OSRHE. Furthermore, this research provided valuable information to Oklahoma's Legislators regarding fiscal decision-making with respect to Oklahoma's higher education institutions.

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Appendices
Appendix A
Interview Protocol

Oklahoma Public Comprehensive Universities:
The President's Role in Financial Management and Fundraising
University of Arkansas

Time of interview: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Institution: _____

Previous position: _____

Academic major: _____

Highest degree earned: _____

Years of service as president: _____

**THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY ABOUT YOUR
ROLE IN BUDGETING, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, AND FUNDRAISING AS A
PRESIDENT OF AN OKLAHOMA PUBLIC COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY. THIS
STUDY REALLY FOCUSES ON YOUR PERCEPTIONS OF YOUR EXPERIENCES AS
PRESIDENT IN THE ROLES OF BUDGETING, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, AND
FUNDRAISING.**

**I AM PROVIDING YOU WITH AN INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR YOU TO
REVIEW AND SIGN, IF YOU AGREE. AS NOTED, YOUR IDENTITY WILL BE
KEPT CONFIDENTIAL TO THE EXTENT ALLOWED BY LAW AND UNIVERSITY**

POLICY. NO IDENTIFYING INFORMATION WILL BE USED IN ANY REPORT OR PUBLICATION RESULTING FROM THIS RESEARCH.

ONLY FIELD NOTES ON THIS INTERVIEW GUIDE WILL BE COLLECTED DURING THIS INTERVIEW.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS ENTIRELY VOLUNTARY AND YOU MAINTAIN THE RIGHT TO WITHDRAW AT ANY TIME.

BEFORE WE BEGIN, DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

DO I HAVE YOUR PERMISSION TO BEGIN?

Should you have questions or concerns about this survey, please contact Mark B. Shields [REDACTED], or his Dissertation Director, Dr. Michael Miller [REDACTED], University of Arkansas, [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

SECTION I: YOUR PERSONAL BACKGROUND

1. Describe for me your role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. What do you think you could have done to become prepared for your role in these areas?

Other elements to consider:

-previous experience in budgeting

-previous experience in financial management

-previous experience in fundraising

-formal education and/or training in these areas

-informal education and/or training in these areas

-professional affiliations in these areas

-mentors or role models

2. What personal and professional characteristics as president do you perceive are necessary to be competent in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?

Other elements to consider:

-personal strengths and weaknesses

-professional strengths and weaknesses

-did you have questions about your role in these areas as a president?

-did you feel personally prepared for your role in these areas as a president?

-did you feel professionally prepared for your role in these areas as a president?

3. How would you describe your prior experience with budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?

Other elements to consider:

-personal experiences in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising

-friendships/social organizations

-membership in professional associations

-external board service in relation to budgeting, financial management, and fundraising

-certifications, conferences, courses

4. How do you perceive your previous experience in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising has contributed to your current and future success in these areas?
5. How much of your time do you perceive you spend on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising?

Other elements to consider:

-is the time you spend in these areas proportionate?

-in which area do you spend most of your time and why?

-how do you determine what is the best use of your time?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY!

Appendix B

IRB Approval Confirmation



To: Mark Bradley Shields
From: Douglas J Adams, Chair
IRB Expedited Review
Date: 06/22/2021
Action: **Expedited Approval**
Action Date: 06/22/2021
Protocol #: 2105334107
Study Title: Oklahoma Public Comprehensive University President: The President's Role in Financial Management and Fundraising
Expiration Date: 05/24/2022
Last Approval Date:

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited 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 from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

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: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes 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.

cc: Michael T Miller, Key Personnel

Appendix C

Request to Participate Email

May --, 2021

(President)
(Public Comprehensive University)
(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 Director of Operations of the Broken Arrow campus for Northeastern State University. As the president of (institution name), you are aware of the current budgetary constraints as a higher education administrator in the state of Oklahoma. According to the American Council on Education's American College President Study (2017), public comprehensive university (PCU) presidents are spending most of their time on budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. Additionally, the mounting pressure associated with external revenue generation through fundraising initiatives is a critical role for PCU presidents throughout the state. My dissertation, entitled "Oklahoma Public Comprehensive Universities: The President's Role in Financial Management and Fundraising," will explore the perceptions of PCU presidents at Oklahoma institutions regarding their roles, previous experience, and involvement in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. Obtaining a greater understanding of the president's role in these areas may provide a framework for PCU presidents to follow as they establish possible solutions to the financial challenges they face.

The criteria associated with this qualitative, multiple case study, identified you for inclusion in the research. I realize you have a very busy schedule, and additional time commitments are difficult; however, I am asking for your participation in the study to further research this important area for the current and future leaders of PCUs. My study will include a one-time site visit for an interview that will last approximately 45-60 minutes. If a site visit is not possible, the interview can be conducted through Zoom. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. No identifying information will be used in any report or publication resulting from this research. It is my desire to complete the interviews as soon as possible.

Please contact me at: [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or Dr. Michael Miller at: [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] if any further information is needed. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you for your cooperation and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Shields
Higher Education Doctoral Student
University of Arkansas

Appendix D
Informed Consent Form

Oklahoma Public Comprehensive Universities:
The President's Role in Financial Management and Fundraising
Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Principal Researcher: Mark Bradley Shields, Doctoral Student, Higher Education Ed.D. Program
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michael Miller, Professor, Higher Education, University of Arkansas

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

You are invited to participate in a research study about the role of Oklahoma public comprehensive university presidents in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an Oklahoma public comprehensive university president.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

Who is the Principal Researcher?

Mark Bradley Shields
Doctoral Candidate
Higher Education Ed.D. Program
University of Arkansas



Who is the Faculty Advisor?

Dr. Michael Miller
Professor, Higher Education
Graduate Education Building 153
College of Education and Health Professions
University of Arkansas



What is the purpose of this research study?

The purpose of this study is to describe and examine the perceptions of Oklahoma public comprehensive university presidents about their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

Who will participate in this study?

10, Oklahoma public comprehensive university presidents.

What am I being asked to do?

Your participation will require the following: One meeting lasting 45-60 minutes, conducted in-person or via Zoom interview. You will answer five questions associated with your role in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

There is a potential for you and your responses to be identified as a risk due to the Freedom of Information Act in Arkansas which allows for records of any research to be requested by anyone. Likewise, given the small target population, it is not likely that confidentiality can be assured as someone will likely be identifiable by at least some individuals even if the data is completely anonymized.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

The anticipated benefits to the participant are enlightenment on the shared experiences of Oklahoma public comprehensive university presidents regarding their roles in budgeting, financial management, and fundraising which will allow for self-reflection on the role they play in this process at their respective institutions.

How long will the study last?

Your participation will consist of one meeting for approximately 45-60 minutes which will be conducting either on site in person or through a Zoom interview.

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

No, you will not receive any compensation for choosing to participate in this study.

Will I have to pay for anything?

No, there will be no cost associated with your position.

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

If you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate. Also, you may refuse to participate at any time during the study. Your job with the University will not be affected in any way if you refuse to participate.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. No identifying information will be used in any report or publication resulting from this research.

Will I know the results of the study?

At the conclusion of the study you will have the right to request feedback about the results. You may contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Michael Miller [REDACTED] or Principal Researcher, Mark Shields [REDACTED]. You will receive a copy of this form for your files.

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

You have the right to contact the Principal Researcher or Faculty Advisor as listed below for any concerns that you may have.

Mark Shields [REDACTED]

Dr. Michael Miller [REDACTED]

You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Compliance office listed below if you have questions about your rights as a participant, or to discuss any concerns about, or problems with the research.

Ro Windwalker, CIP
Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Compliance
University of Arkansas
109 MLKG Building
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201
[REDACTED]

I have read the above statement and have been able to ask questions and express concerns, which have been satisfactorily responded to by the investigator. I understand the purpose of the study as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. I understand that participation is voluntary. I understand that significant new findings developed during this research will be shared with the participant. I understand that no rights have been waived by signing the consent form. I have been given a copy of the consent form.

Signature

Date