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On the Same Page: Student Government and the University Administrative Agenda Alignment

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by

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Abstract

Within institutions of higher education, shared governance is an essential component to a healthy functionality. Among the many stakeholders at these institutions, students are the largest in number and hold primacy. Participation in student governance establishes a sense of shared ownership over their communities while also providing a unique avenue for students to gain wisdom and develop critical skill sets. Senior administrators at these institutions have many inherent challenges due to an organization that is largely decentralized and autonomous (Duderstadt, 2007). Regarding agenda setting, the Garbage Can Model (Cohen et al., 1972) was utilized as a theoretical framework.

The purpose for conducting this study was to analyze Student Government Associations (SGA) at 8 select land-grant institutions of higher education in order to establish the answers to 4 research questions. (1) How do student leaders at select land-grant intuitions of higher education describe their policy priorities? (2) How do the presidents at the same institutions describe their priorities in select institutional or media documents? (3) To what extent are the agendas of SGAs and institutional presidents aligned? (4) How did student body presidents describe their working relationship with their respective institutional leader and does that impact agenda alignment? The answers to these questions were found utilizing a qualitative methodology. Specifically, official documents from the SGAs were reviewed and coded. Additionally, the student body presidents of 6 of the 8 universities in question were subjects in a semi-structured interview. Finally, official university documents, public remarks, and media coverage were analyzed and coded to establish the policy agendas for each institution's president.

The study found that Student Government Associations conduct policy implementation in the form of organizational management as the most prominent agenda item. In addition to that, it

was shown that SGAs prioritize campus infrastructure improvements, campus safety, and the overall wellness of the student body. Presidents at the same institutions discussed issues related to research and innovation most prominently. They also prominently discussed campus infrastructure. The semi-structured interviews and document analysis showed a minimal alignment between the agendas. However, student body presidents indicated that they did not necessarily anticipate alignment given the differences in their constituencies. They also mostly described having positive relationships built upon mutual trust despite the lacking alignment. Institutional presidents were also found to rarely prioritize issues related to campus safety and sexual assault in direct contrast with SGAs. These findings emphasize the importance of shared governance within these institutions. Positive relationships between SGAs and their presidents emphasize constructive communication and reciprocity between the subjects which leads to more buy-in by stakeholders and innovative ideas.

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Dedication

This is dedicated to Bryan, Darin, and Kaiden. You have my whole heart.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

A. Context of the Problem

For institutions of higher education to thrive, it must prioritize shared governance. Astin and Astin (2000) discussed this notion at length. They posited that students "as the prime stakeholder in the collegiate community, have both the right and responsibility" (p. 31) to be active participants in the governance of their institution. Moreover, the notion of shared governance has been demonstrated to be a successful management strategy particularly for institutions of higher education. Birnbaum (2004) wrote that a strong centralized authority within academia fails to effectively instill a sense of unity within the institution, but rather, it is more likely to create factions born out of one's academic discipline. Taylor (2013) wrote, "academic freedom is an integral part of generating academic success that cannot be commanded from the top down but must be nurtured from the bottom up" (p. 85). Shared governance, however, allows for productive disagreement and more creative problem solving (2004). Higher education is a rapidly changing and fluid environment. This demands maximum participation from key stakeholders in the form of shared governance. Without that, institutions will fail to keep up with changing demands (Bejou & Bejou, 2016). Additionally, student participation in shared governance is key to productively addressing problems, establishing a sense if ownership in solutions to problems, and ultimately preparing students for civic engagement after graduation (Kouba, 2018). This makes Student Government Associations a salient and crucial topic for policy research. Institutions of higher education will not be able to remain competitive without a full engagement of the most vital stakeholder on any campus: students.

Student Governmental Associations (SGAs) take upon many forms and names from one institution to the next. What is most important is the fact that these organizations are based on the

representation and activism as they seek to be the voice of students, their concerns, and priorities (Miller & Nadler, 2006). What's more, one of the key principles that defines these organizations is their institutional longevity (McKaig, 1999). Furthermore, unlike many other campus entities, an SGA allows students to create and establish a prevailing institutional identity and history (1999) while simultaneously addressing issues that may not be easily resolved within the span of an academic year. Traditional undergraduates will spend at least 4 years on a given campus and they may work with more than one university president on the same or similar on-going concerns (Laosebikan-Buggs, 2006). The inherent ability for an SGA to help establish a shared history among students over decades and amidst multiple regimes establish the relevancy that Keller (1985) believes is so often missing in this genre of research.

Typically, student leaders within an SGA are provided access to campus governance and leadership in a way that is afforded to very few, if any, other student organizations. These relationships are both formally and informally established and cultivated. McKaig (1999) wrote of SGA leaders, "in order to maximize their influence on institutional decisions, they will be required to set up the informal networks with powerful people" (p. 5). Of course, the success of the relationship between elected student leadership and an institution's executives is absolutely essential for overall institutional wellness. This is hardly a simple endeavor, however. The complexity of the role played by the university president is arguably one of the largest barriers that are faced. These roles have been compared to that of a chief executive officer of a multi-national corporation. Duderstadt (2007) describes the overarching trials these executives must constantly balance:

> […] the university presidency requires an extremely delicate and subtle form of leadership, sometimes based more on style than substance and usually more inclined to build consensus rather than take decisive action. The very phrases used to characterize

academic leadership, such as "herding cats" or "moving cemeteries," suggest the complexity of the university presidency. Universities are led, not managed (2007, p. 106).

This leadership needs to be provided with scholarship that helps support intentional collaboration to understand the issues that arise among the student body and addressed via an SGA. Miles (2018) was categorical in making this point: "Presidents need to engage their campuses and focus on students as individuals [...] [and] distinguish the fine line between students as customers and students as young adults" (p. 10). For this study, it has beeen apparent why it is necessary to establish a system of shared governance that specifically involves a campus' top leaders and students. It's long been recognized through policy literature that any organization or government has limited resources and can only address a limited amount of policy issues at a given time (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Birkland & DeYoung, 2012). Understanding how agenda setting is occurring among SGAs and their institution's leaders has shed light on the most productive way to set their agendas, design policy, and implement it.

B. Statement of Purpose

The purpose for conducting this study has been analyze Student Government Associations, their priorities, agendas, actions, and experiences with campus leadership. This will provide insight into the extent to which power and authority are shared between administrators and elected student leaders. This understanding will establish discernments into how campus administrators can work collaboratively, and how they can best align the work of representative government on college campuses.

C. Statement of Research Questions

The study will seek to answer the following research questions:

1. How did elected student government leaders at select land grant universities describe their organizational agendas and priorities?

2. At the same institutions, what agendas and priorities were identified by institutional leadership documents?

3. To what extent were the student government and institutional leadership agendas and priorities aligned?

4. How did student body presidents describe their working relationship with their respective institutional leader and does that impact agenda alignment?

D. Definitions

1. *Agenda Setting:* the process by which issues rise to the attention of and are prioritized by policymakers (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005)

2. *Institution of higher education:* an educational institution accredited by a nationally recognized agency, legally authorized to provide education beyond secondary education, that accepts individuals with a high school diploma or equivalent, and that awards "bachelor's degree or provides not less than a 2-year program that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree, or awards a degree that is acceptable for admission to a graduate or professional degree program" ("Higher Educaiton Act," 1965, p. para. 4)

3. *Student government association (SGA):* an organization within an institution of higher education that "by virtue of its composition and constitution is entitled to represent the student community as a whole" (Freidson, 1955, p. 6)

4. *President:* the individual that serves the chief administrator at an institution of higher education, the primary figurehead responsible to various stakeholders and government agencies including a Board of Trustees (Birnbaum, 2005)

5. *Student body president:* the democratically elected chief executive officer of the student body, primary student liaison to administrators within institutions of higher education

6. *Meeting agenda:* the order in which particular business is taken up during a formal session of a deliberative body, also known as order of business, orders of the day, program (Robert III et al., 2013)

7. *Meeting Minutes*: establishing a record of what took place, "the official record of the proceedings of a deliberative assembly" (Robert III et al., 2013, p. 468)

8. *Institutional priorities of a chancellor or president*: a strategic mission and plan with consideration for current circumstances and future aspirations by the institution's president or chancellor (Taylor et al., 2008) outlined in a State of the University address, university publication (i.e., website), or other public-facing medium.

E. Assumptions

In conducting this study there are several assumptions established. First, it is assumed that agendas, meeting minutes, and all other official documents will be available for review. Institutions where that is not possible will be excluded. Additionally, the analyzed media are an accurate reflection of the gatherings they seek to portray. Regarding institutional priorities for a president, it's further assumed that they will be identified on portions of the official website and/or press releases and/or media coverage. Inability to establish institutional priorities will exclude the institution from the study. Furthermore, it is assumed that these outlined priorities are sincere representations of the current plan and strategy being undertaken. When conducting interviews with SGA presidents, it is assumed that they will answer questions truthfully and completely.

It will be also assumed that the SGAs within this study conduct their operations in a democratic and transparent way. Additionally, the SGA is given the opportunity by the institution to participate in shared governance in some form. That can include, but is not limited

to, allocation of certain fee moneys, formal recognition by institutional stakeholders, and/or having the ability to opine on policy matters.

F. Delimitations and Limitations

When reviewing documents and conducting a critical thematic analysis (CTA), the categories and themes that are established are contingent on socially constructed concepts (Prior, 2014) and are subject to the experiences and biases of the author. More specifically, my biases are born out of my role as the advisor for student government leadership at the University of Arkansas and participant in graduate student government for more than 4 years.

Furthermore, as outlined by Ochieng (2009), a qualitative approach in general encompasses foundational limitations. Among them are the inability to establish the frequency of a certain phenomenon. This methodology also risks inaccurate translation of a word or phrase in documents or in semi-structured interviews. Finally, qualitative research seeks to tell a story and therefore does not establish statistical reliability.

While efforts were made to study institutions of higher education that were comparable, the decentralized and complex nature of universities leads to an additional limitation. Ahi (2018) wrote about the competing markets for students, faculty, and research funding (to name only a few) each institution will cater slightly differently. Similarly, the contrasting priorities of external stakeholders (i.e., state government, donors, boards of trustees) will result in institutions with inconsistent culture (McNaughtan et al., 2019).

G. Importance of the Study

Agenda setting literature has largely focused on state actors who specifically relate to the traditional political arena (i.e., political parties, budgetary matters, intergovernmental organizations). However, the modern democratic structure of nation states remains relatively

new with most coming to existence in the past century. For this reason, the study of public policy and, more specifically, agenda setting remains somewhat novel. While its application continues to grow, it's pertinence to organizations outside of the traditional government structures is even more novel; bureaucratic organizations remain at the heart of public policy. As Kelman (2005) discussed at length, what is established or decreed by senior policy makers does not automatically establish policy changes. Ultimately, large, and complex departments inside and outside of government bring about policy changes. Street-level bureaucrats lead this charge, but even among these individuals, organizational complexity, and resistance to change become hallmarks of policy implementation.

On a macro-level, the research will provide insight into how the bureaucracy of public institutions of higher education (land grant and flagship institutions, more specifically) works within a structure that is controlled by layers of government. These organizations are governed by state hierarchy, such as boards of trustees, state legislatures, and governors. The federal government also plays a crucial role via funding (i.e., federal grants), regulation, and legislative priorities. The complexity herein is ripe with opportunities to provide scholarship to agenda setting and policy implementation.

On a micro-level, the study will provide much needed insight into the complex organizational operations found at flagship institutions of higher education. The convolution of these large institutions is akin to a large, multi-national corporation. In addition to managing the priorities established by state and federal government, universities are in and of themselves emblematic of larger scholarship of public policy due to their various layers of authority, competing stakeholders, and power struggles. Student stakeholders exist in a unique, albeit temporary, world that provides them with tools and opportunities that are vital to achieve

academic success and overall cognitive development as a young adult. Utilizing democratically elected student government as the focal point of this research mirrored the democratic process demonstrated at many other realms in a democratic society making the study of SGAs applicable to the field.

While public policy scholarship in general continues to evolve, the subset of higher education policy is even more novel. Scholars in the field have lamented the literature as being outdated and/or not appropriately applicable. The central role that institutions of higher education have in developing productive and knowledgeable members of society cannot be overstated. Institutions of higher education have a vital role in our society that goes well beyond basic classroom learning. Nevertheless, the current literature needs to be considerably more expansive if managing these bureaucratic monsters is to be as maximally effective. This study has contributed directly to that understanding. Additionally, scholarship specifically analyzing student government through a public policy framework is nearly nonexistent.

A deeper understanding and insight of SGAs is germane and timely to student affairs officers and their presidents/chancellors. The importance of out-of-classroom learning has been well established for the past several decades and this has been realized in expanding student affairs divisions. Put simply, institutions of higher education are highly competitive and student experiences directly shape an institution's ability to market themselves. It is also well recognized that participation in activities and organizations on a university campus directly correlates to stronger engagement within the classroom further increasing retention and other academic metrics that determine institutional rankings. There is, however, very little scholarship that looks specifically at student governance. These organizations provide a fertile ground for cognitive development and knowledge compared to the typical out-of-classroom learning experience.

Conflict resolution, communication skills, principles of democracy, and the importance of community involvement are just a few of the key tenants of student governance. These skills are directly transferable to life post-graduation.

The research also provided insight to student leaders and university executives in more effectively managing the balancing act of shared governance. Typically, SGAs are not afforded extensive trust by campus leadership. Similarly, student leaders view campus officials as being out of touch and can be naturally skeptical of their motives. Helping establish trust can lead to a campus community that is considerably less adversarial when the student voices are given the proverbial seat at the table for key decisions. As the primary stakeholder within the community, their voices provide the most direct and succinct feedback on institutional priorities and their broader impact. Additionally, current literature within public policy has shown that when individuals participate in agenda setting, the policy implementation and policy evaluation stages can be more successful due to the sense of shared responsibility that is conjured as an active community member.

H. Theoretical Framework

Institutions of higher education find themselves in an environment that is quite fluid, requiring innovation in campus governance in a way that is typically reactive and chaotic. In a discussion of the modern "business model" utilized in higher education, Ahi (2018) aptly summarized the macro-level organizational challenges that are faced:

> Academic institutions operate in several different markets, including the market for faculty and staff, the student recruitment market, the research funding market, and the post-graduation career market. These have all been changing and are facing heightened competition, an avalanche of new technologies and increased demands for accountability (p. 116).

McGee (2015) went further and outlined several overarching adjustments that leaders in higher education must make. With thousands of institutions of higher education and rapidly enhanced remote-learning technology, higher education has found itself needing to operate similar to other (more typical) market commodities as they struggle to distinguish themselves while simultaneously not impacting cost of attendance in the process (2015). From a shared governance perspective, this adds yet another layer to the obstacles that students have when they seek an opportunity to represent their peers through a Student Government Associations (SGA) and provide influence on how their institutions operate.

Agenda setting and subsequent policy implementation within the realm of academia is uniquely complex. Arthur (2011) wrote "…in contemporary society, colleges and universities remain a distinct type of organization" (p. 3) that operate in a way that can be described as organized chaos. The diversity of priorities that must be considered by campus administrators on a day-to-day is stark. Cohen et al. (1972) coined the term "Garbage Can Model" (GCM) to apply specifically to the academe due to its complex and often-competing goals. More specifically, they use 3 qualifiers to identify organized anarchy (numbers added):

> [1] It can be described better as a loose collection of ideas than as a coherent structure; it discovers preferences through action more than it acts on the basis of preference…[2] It operates on the basis of simple trial-and-error procedures, the residue of learning from the accidents of past experience participants… [3] Vary in the amount of time and effort they devote to different domains; involvement varies from one time to another (Cohen et al., 1972, p. 1).

Put differently, institutions of higher education find themselves establishing policy reactively, advocating for solutions while in search of problems, and the process by which those policies are managed is contingent on whom among the stakeholders is leading the charge and how much effort they are able to lend to the issue compared with other stakeholders; these represent the 3

streams that flow into the perpetually disorganized "garbage can" (1972). The ability for certain

problems and solutions to be realized further comes down to an issue of energy quota by

participants that can be contingent via both access and influence. (Levinthal, 2012). Denrell

(2012) elaborates on this notion when writing, "The nature of the choice will change depending

on who happens to take part in the decision, what aspects of the alternatives become salient, and

how the discussion of the alternatives proceeds" (p. 66). This, of course, is something that

fluctuates with time since energy outputs, problems, and solutions will shift and change.

The value of the comparison between an SGA and other interest groups will provide

fertile ground to future research that seeks to understand how and why certain issues are

undertaken and why certain issues are not. Hinrichs and Johnston (2020) write of the importance

of this scholarship:

> If the management of the participatory agenda-setting process within a boundary
> organization is successful, it results in a less politicized collaborative environment
> wherein members of different social groups can work together to co-produce knowledge,
> meet on relatively neutral grounds, and more effectively promote the use of knowledge to
> inform future decision making (2020, p. 2).

Collaborative governance by stakeholders at an institution of higher education relies on setting

an agenda as one of the first steps of the policy process (Kingdon, 2011). Students are ultimately

"custodians of the institution and their involvement is important and critical to life of the

institutions" (Miller & Nadler, 2006, p. 15).

The idea of agenda setting is a relatively new field of study first appearing in the mid-

twentieth century. As one of the founding fathers of public policy scholarship, Dahl (1961)

established what is known as the first-face of power. The focus of this theory is based on one

group exerting power over another. However, that fails to hold water in the same ways the neo-

elitist theories do and a review of the second and third-faces of power put forward by Gaventa

(1982) and Bachrach and Baratz (1962). While Dahl's (1961) theory can, at first glance, appear to be a sound observational tactic, it fails to effectively account for the complexity of human interactions. Dahl seems to be attempting to take science-based rationale and applying it to the study of humanities when human interactions are anything but clear and predictable. Bachrach and Baratz (1962) built upon this by acknowledging that policy inaction is immensely important; inaction goes far beyond the scientific tangibly observations. Gaventa (1982) further acknowledged the complexity of the political arena, sought to describe the means by which the powerful and elite wield power completely outside of the political arena in order to ensure the powerless do not attempt to gain control. The evolution of these theories provides a foundation for researching the policy agenda for Student Government Associations (SGA). Rochefort and Cobb (1994) established a solid underpinning to base the prediction that the 3-faces of power will continue to evolve, and they provided a glimpse into foundational policy theory for the organizations in question. They also noted that the nature of conflict plays an essential role in how the agenda setting process functions (1994).

Policy implementation as a field of study began in the 1970s and 1980s with Mazmanian and Sabatier (1981) when they established one of the first key frameworks for the concept. More specifically, Smith and Larimer (2016) described their framework as having "five distinct elements: the outputs of implementing agencies, the target population's compliance with these policy outputs. The actual impacts of policy outputs, the perceived impacts of policy outputs, and major revision in the statue" (2016, p. 158). The competing approach was less centrally focused (or "top-down") when Lipsky (1980) developed a framework that asserted policy implementation was not something that can be established by top-level leaders. Rather, it was ultimately implemented by what he termed street-level bureaucrats who are entrusted with doing

the work on a day-to-day level (Smith & Larimer, 2016). However, Kohoutek (2013)

summarized the deficiencies when writing "both schools of thought exaggerated their respective

positions empirically, methodologically as well as normatively, ignoring the portion of the

implementation reality explored by the other school" (2013, p. 63).

In recent years, policy implementation theory has evolved to embrace more democratic

models for policy making. deLeon and deLeon (2002) discussed the matter when they wrote,

"We suggest more democracy is better than less; that is, more direct forms should be preferred

unless there are strong and articulated reasons to avoid" (p. 482). This democratic emphasis

further evolved in the subsequent decades to include a more specific definition of collaborative

policymaking (Ansell et al., 2017; Sørensen & Torfing, 2011). This notion combines the

conceptions of top-down and bottom-up implementation frameworks, in addition to elements of

agenda setting. The literature proposes the following conditions for using collaborative

policymaking as a vehicle for improved policy implementation: 1) better ideas are generated and

selected among individuals with contrasting experiences; 2) collaboration between policy makers

and street-level bureaucrats creates a mutual sense of ownership; 3) the collaborative process

establishes relationships that will help cultivate additional innovation (Sørensen & Torfing,

2011).

The reason for developing the policy implementation through collaborative policymaking

is found with the inadequacies established in the first 3 generations of implementation theory.

Scholars failed to intellectually articulate a theory on implementation that was applicable in-

practice beyond one specific study (deLeon & deLeon, 2002). For example, top-down

implementation carries inherent risk that disengagement from "street-level bureaucrats" (i.e.,

those who deal with implementation on a day-to-day basis) by policymakers is too large of a

chain to be realistically productive. The bottom-down theories must rectify the fact that "discretionary practices of street-level bureaucrats will distort the production and delivery of services and prevent the realization of the overall policy objectives" (Ansell et al., 2017, p. 470) if they aren't provided the proverbial seat at the table. Finally, policymakers are likely to encounter basic systemic resistance due to the fact that many issues are ingrained within long entrenched socioeconomic challenges (2017). As such, the value of collaborative policymaking is its on-going nature; the long-term cooperation from stakeholders theoretically establishes sufficient resources and buy-in to manage anticipated and unforeseen implementation challenges.

Uniting portions of agenda setting theory alongside policy implementation is, in short, what collaborative policymaking seeks to achieve. When an issue arises, ensuring that it finds its way to the agenda requires scrutiny from those involved. More specific to higher education, ensuring appropriate buy-in from students through SGAs in agenda setting, the subsequent steps in the policy process (policymaking and policy implementation) will be less ineffective and anemic. Ansell et al. (2017) wrote that, "the opportunity for relevant and affected actors to participate in the design of innovative solutions will create a sense of joint commitment to and responsibility for the implementation of the innovative policy design" (p. 476). While policy process remains a relatively new field of study, the unique and chaotic nature of institutions of higher education, the diversity among stakeholders, and the means by which they undertake agenda setting, policymaking, and policy implementation provides fertile ground for future scholarship in higher education administration and public policy more broadly.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This chapter provides a review of the literature regarding the study of higher education and agenda setting. More specifically, historical context will be provided regarding Student Government Associations (SGAs) in the United States, outlining their origins, the impact of the legal doctrine, *in loco parentis*, and the impacts these SGAs have had on the history of the United States particularly during the Civil Rights era. Thereafter, literature related to how SGAs function and the cognitive benefits of participating in student governance are reviewed. Shared governance on campuses involves campus presidents. Scholarship is offered that describes the ways by which university presidents prioritize policy matters and the facets of leadership that have been proven to be successful in some specific examples. Finally, the theoretical framework of agenda setting is presented with a key focus on collaborative policy implementation and agenda setting theory. Utilizing the resources provided by the University of Arkansas' library, several sources were utilized in gathering the literature. Search terms employed included "student governance," "shared governance + higher education," "higher education leadership," "civil rights + student government," "campus activism," "agenda setting theory + higher education," "higher education + policy implementation within EBSCOhost, JSTOR, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. Additionally, specific searches were conducted to provide additional context or validation from a source found utilizing the terms. Peer-reviewed journals, academic textbooks, and journalistic sources were among the sources reviewed and analyzed.

The history of student government associations as advocates and policy makers on campuses originated in the 1700s. Likely pre-dating the ratification of the US Constitution, students in higher education found themselves advocating for their collective interests and promoting independent thinking (May, 2010). In the 18th century college campuses were small,

catered almost exclusively to White men of privilege, and provided virtually no extracurricular activities. Further, the individual rights of these students were nonexistent, creating a desire for empowerment (2010). The first iterations of what would eventually become student government SGAs were literary societies. They were first established at Harvard University or Yale University (though, some dispute which one was truly the pioneering institution). Due to limited curriculums, these literary societies often served as an outlet for students to engage in areas of interest outside the standard teachings of Greek, Roman, and Biblical texts. Writing on the birth of student spirit at Yale, Kelley (1974) described the literary societies:

> There they could debate, orate, and discuss to their hearts' content. And from the small society libraries they could borrow books of a lighter character than those owned by the college. Frederick Rudolph correctly says that these societies, which originated at Yale but soon appeared elsewhere, were "the first effective agency of intellect to make itself felt in the American college" (p. 107).

At the start of the 19th century, literary societies began to evolve. Over the next century, the emergence of organizations that became actively interested in student life formed in the shape of honor societies and student councils (May, 2010). Additionally, the emergence of other extracurricular activities began to become increasingly common. In particular, student publications began to crop up providing not just information, but including editorials outlining issues within the student body (Dorn, 2017).

Ultimately, shortly after World War II, higher education institutions grew exponentially and the current iteration of an SGA took shape and came to include executive, legislative, and judicial branches to maximize student representation (May, 2010). A particular shift on campuses occurred in the late-1940s into the 1950s. President Harry Truman established a Commission on Higher Education to review and analyze colleges and universities across the United States. Specifically, President Truman tasked this committee with finding ways to

continue to expand access to higher education and expand curriculum offered to include an emphasis on social sciences (Truman, 1946). In the 1950s, for example, the University of South Florida was established. The founding president, John S. Allen, described how one of the founding missions of the institution was to create more civic minded individuals who could thrive in a democratic society and give back to their community. It became a driving force in the era, as exemplified by Allen, to prioritize civic mindedness among higher education students (Dorn, 2017). This civic mindedness would continue to evolve and prove itself a catalyst for shared governance and transformative social movements.

A. The End of *In Loco Parentis* and the Start of the Civil Rights Movement

Until the 1960s, students within institutions of higher education were governed by the legal concept of *in loco parentis*, which is literally translated to "in place of" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2016). The term is "rooted in the British and American common law traditions" (Lee, 2011, p. 67) and established that academic institutions could subsume the role of parent and guardian for their students. Campus leadership was provided authority to control all aspects of the their students' lives. This was exemplified in the expulsion of students for rumors of bad behavior ("Anthony v. Syracuse University," 1928) and failing to, in the institution's view, adequately manage one's personal finances ("Gott v. Berea College," 1913). This standard was capitulated by the Illinois Supreme Court when they wrote that a student "must yield obedience to those who, for the time being, are his masters. By voluntarily entering the university, or being placed there by those having the right to control him, he necessarily surrenders very many of his individual rights" ("North v. Board of Trustees of the University," 1891, p. 306). Legal challenges consistently fell on deaf ears because the "power of in loco parentis lay in the immunity that a college received from courts regarding lawsuits by students who were

disgruntled over regulation and discipline" (Lake, 1999, p. 5). The existence of these (failed) lawsuits demonstrated a longstanding desire for independence and freedom of thought. For a time, however, the United States judiciary did not concur.

During the late-1950s and 1960s, racial tensions mixed with a strong post-war economy that continued to expand access to higher education. During this time, universities found themselves placed in the middle of a brewing battle. Leaders of public universities were subject to the political whims of their state's politicians' increasing pressure in an already tense situation (Turner, 2010). While race, anti-war protests, and other social issues defined many of the era's movements, the norms established by centuries of *in loco parentis* became another casualty of campus activism. One marque example of this was a protest at the Alabama Statehouse by several hundred Black students from Alabama State College in March 1960. In response to the protests, the Governor of Alabama used the power of his office and requested that the State Board of Education expel 9 of the Black student protestors for being disruptive by to taking part in the protest. The Board complied with the governor's request. No hearing was provided prior to the Alabama State College president carrying out the Board of Education's directive. The case was ultimately litigated, and the Fifth Circuit Court believed that the actions undertaken by the Board of Education clearly violated the constitutional rights of the students in question:

> We are confident that precedent as well as a most fundamental constitutional principle support our holding that due process requires notice and some opportunity for hearing before a student at a tax-supported college is expelled for misconduct… (Dixon v. Alabama, 1961, p. 158)

The constitutional requirements for the due process affording to students at a public institution of higher education were further outlined as follows:

> The notice [of charges] should contain a statement of the specific charges and grounds which, if proven, would justify expulsion under the regulations of the Board of Education… By its nature, a charge of misconduct, as opposed [*159] to a failure to meet

the scholastic standards of the college, depends upon a collection of the facts concerning the charged misconduct, easily colored by the point of view of the witnesses. In such circumstances, a hearing which gives the Board or the administrative authorities of the college an opportunity to hear both sides in considerable detail is best suited to protect the rights of all involved. (Dixon v. Alabama, 1961, pp. 158-159)

The case law established altered the culture within institutions of higher education in perpetuity by ensuring constitutional protections for students. Further, it helped lay the groundwork for some of the largest and most widespread protests in US history.

In hindsight, the new post-war "baby boom" generation was subject to a major shift in culture. Many attribute this to the unprecedented access to the global economy and abundance of wealth (Dorn, 2017). In describing the minutiae that faced young adults at the time, Rodriguez-Amat and Jeffery (2017) wrote:

These complex circumstances redefine the position of the students within the new university governance frame. The principle implemented at the university, aiming at more democratic forms and for equality of access under a transparent meritocratic framework, sets conditions for the profile of the students as political actors in permanent tension; permanently asking for fairness, clarity and intellectual worthiness. Students born from the new university logic were also engaged citizens aware and reactive to global geopolitical injustices (p. 532).

The legacy of this overly-paternalist structure created a fertile ground for rebellion and a path for shared governance that was loudly demanded across the nation. In 1965, a student-led newspaper at Michigan State University encapsulated the feeling succinctly when speaking of their institutions' leaders said, "Although you govern me, or at least attempt to do so, I have not elected you or consented to your government" (Scott, 2016, p. 113).

One of the most influential organizations in the 1960s was Students for a Democratic Society and their publishing of the Port Huron Statement in 1962. The document stated that campuses are the "obvious starting point" (Students for a Democratic Society, 1990, p. 62) for ending political apathy and seeking justice. Few campuses exemplified this concept more than

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College (NCA&T), a Historically Black College/University (HBCU) in North Carolina. The activism of their SGA brought about one of the most significant events in the Civil Rights Era. On February 1, 1960, at the Woolworth Store lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina 4 Black students from NCA&T, Ezell Blair Jr., Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and David Richmond, began a sit-in to protest segregation. This demonstration would ultimately last several days attracting hundreds of supporters to the small downtown store (Morgan & Davies, 2012). In an even larger show of solidarity over the next 3 months, over 50,000 students gathered in 78 cities and towns across the southern United States (2012). NCA&T quite literally helped alter the history of civil rights in the US.

The ability of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College to leave its mark on the civils rights struggle throughout the 1960s can be traced directly to the organization and leadership cultivated by their student government and the support of NCA&T president, Warmouth T. Gibbs. Unlike many other HBCUs throughout the South at the time, Gibbs refused to sanction student protesters which provided legitimacy and respect to keep the movement alive (Favors, 2019). As described by NCA&T student leader Claude Barnes, the engagement was fully anchored by their student government:

> During that time, I can remember the [Student Government Association] would call a meeting. I don't care if they called it at 2:00 a.m., Harrison Auditorium would be filled up. People would come out of their dormitories with rollers in their hair. It was that kind of attention. It was that kind of concern among the student body at that time about what's going on in this community and what role could A&T play (Favors, 2019, p. 205).

HBCUs throughout the South inspired college students across the nation to stand up to segregation through protests and sit-ins.

NCA&T remained the epicenter for organizing among Black students for the rest of the 1960s and into the next decade. This culminated at the end of the decade with their founding of

Students Organizing for Black Unity (SOBU) (Favors, 2019). Initially led by students who developed their leadership skills participating in NCA&T's student government, SOBU helped fill the vacuum created when national organizations such as Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) began to fracture at the end of the 1960s. SOBU created a strong network between HBCUs and helped cultivate a sense of Black pride across the United States (2019) despite a national movement that was losing momentum. The fight for Civil Rights would not have been successful "had it not been for A&T's tradition of radicalizing and organizing youths" (Favors, 2019, p. 209).

The impact of NCA&T on the nation's universities was not limited to HBCUs, nor the South. The issues seen in Greensboro became a central inspiration for predominantly White institutions as well; perhaps none more famous the University of California Berkeley. Although student-founded organizations like SNCC and Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) became central to anti-war, civil rights, and free speech movements of the decade across the United States, the Free Speech Movement (FSM) in the Fall of 1964 captivated the nation. The now-famous mantra: "don't trust anyone over thirty" (Scott, 2016, p. 50) became a rallying cry. For Berkeley, however, the organization that became the proverbial tipping point for their famous activism was the Associated Students for the University of California Berkeley (ASUC), their student government association. Born out of the ASUC was SLATE, a group that derived its name from the slate of students running for ASUC seats who believed passionately in anti-segregation. In the summer of 1961, SLATE led a group of students to Mississippi to participate in the Freedom Rides. The first-hand experience of the violence and injustice in the South directly led to some of the most impactful and well-known campus-led protests (Cohen, 2002).

As the FSM began gaining momentum, Berkeley's campus administrators continued to cling to the restrictive policies developed in the 1930s (enacted to quell activism at some campuses at the time) and insisted that student government remain politically neutral, only focusing on specific matters of university governance while on the Berkeley campus (Scott, 2016). As the Freedom Rides and partnerships with other Bay Area civil rights organizations continued, Berkeley's leadership attempted to quell the unrest with a series of even more restrictive policies that hindered free speech. Protests were banned and political impartiality was demanded on campus. However, in an attempt to appear at least somewhat empathetic, Chancellor Clark Kerr decided to focus law enforcement on arresting non-students who were participating in protests (Cohen, 2009). In an attempt to make an example out of one of the protesters, former-student Jack Weinberg was dragged to an awaiting police car after protesting in the student-dubbed "free speech zone." What followed was a remarkable and spontaneous show of organization and civil disobedience. Dozens of students simply sat down creating a human blockade that prevented the police from leaving with their prisoner. For the next 38 hours, the crowd grew considerably as students used the blocked police vehicle's hood as a podium and spoke passionately in favor of free speech and against the establishment (Cohen, 2002, 2009). The inspiration established by HBCUs fighting for equality helped establish the importance of civic and democratic engagement for post-secondary students writ large.

Mario Savio, one of the lead organizers who participated in the sit-in at Berkeley in 1964, once acknowledged that on the surface the unrest on campuses in the South and North were different. However, he insisted that the same rights were being fought for despite being done so under a different guise depending on an individual campus (Cohen, 2002). One example of campus-centered activism can be found throughout the state of Tennessee and the specific

flashpoints that led to student activism that decade. With the diminishment of *in loco parentis,* institutions in Tennessee stood up and fought against a variety of issues including poor dining conditions (Sewanee) and curfews (Morristown College, Vanderbilt, among others) (Ballantyne, 2020). One particularly salient situation took place at University of Tennessee at Knoxville (UTK) during their SGAs presidential election in 1969. The election saw the largest turnout in school history and the election of a Black student, Jimmie Baxter; higher education in the state was still largely segregated at the time making his victory even more transformative. Ballantyne (2020) quoted Baxter in describing the focus of his platform: "We needed to have a legitimate say in running the affairs of the University, particularly regarding the affairs of students … we had to be recognized by the University and given some authority" (p. 303). During his tenure, a search began for a new University president. Students and faculty loudly advocated to have a role in the selection. When their pleas fell on deaf ears, protests erupted. In January 1970, more than 2,500 students gathered to protest their lack of voice. Twenty-two students were arrested. Protests at UTK again garnered national attention later in that spring to show solidarity for those killed at Kent State by the Ohio National Guard and a visit to their campus by Reverend Billy Graham and President Richard Nixon. Again, SGA President Jimmie Baxter led the way in pushing for student autonomy and shared governance by instituting strikes that captured the attention of the nation (Ballantyne, 2020).

North Carolina saw similar protests throughout 1969 and 1970. In May 1970, students at Duke University blocked several roads from traffic for several days over the Kent State killings. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) was the epicenter for student activism statewide, however (Broadhurst, 2015). Shortly after the US invaded Cambodia during the Vietnam War, student body president, Tommy Bello brought together the campus community to

strike. Starting on May 4 following the deaths at Kent state, several days of protests erupted on the campus. The Faculty Senate voted to provide amnesty to striking students who missed final exams. Crowds of nearly 3,000 marched to the Chancellor's home at 2:00 AM on May 6. Later that afternoon, nearly 6,000 students gathered in the middle of the campus to show unity. The following day, Bello and his counterpart at North Carolina State lead a march of 6,000 to the state's capitol. Over the next few days, the protests dwindled in size and semester came to end. Nevertheless, as Broadhurst (2015) noted, "The 6,000 UNC students who went on strike in May 1970 not only showed the power of their collective voice, but also evidenced that protests on southern campuses could rival the scale and intensity witnessed on any college or university in the nation" (p. 99). The collective actions of SGAs did not necessarily lead to immediate reforms. Nevertheless, the legacy of *in loco parentis* and a nation growing more and more weary of the War in Viet Nam brought about large cultural shifts.

B. In the Aftermath of the 1960s

For a myriad of reasons, the nationwide campus-born protests became a rare exception in the coming decades. Some have theorized that the militarization of police that began in earnest in the 1980s allowed for law enforcement to utilize crowd control methods typically reserved for war (Roberts, 2013). Others have theorized that economic decline following the prosperous 1960s reshaped the priorities of college students (Dorn, 2017). One of the few notable protests after the 1970s took place on the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) campus in May 1993 in response to an announcement by the chancellor that the university would be ending its Chicano Studies program. This announcement was exceedingly ill-timed as it coincided with the death of the Latino-American activist Caesar Chavez. Protesters began by occupying a faculty building for a few hours. They were soon met with the Los Angeles Police Department S.W.A.T.

team and officers with tear-gas wearing riot gear. They subsequently arrested nearly 100 students (Armbruster-Sandoval, 2017). Ultimately, the students were forced to revert to a hunger strike which ended in the preservation of the Chicano Studies program, which still exists today bearing the name of Caesar Chavez. Another UC campus in Santa Barbara (UCSB) undertook a similar but more broadly aimed protest the following year in April 1994. This movement was led by El Congreso (2017), an organization born out of the partnership of similar advocacy organizations that joined forces in the 1970s to harness more grassroots power; the organization still exists on the UCSB campus in 2021 (El Congreso de UCSB, 2021). Ultimately, a 9-day hunger strike and the support and organization of El Congreso brought gradual changes to grievances faced by marginalized students at UCSB (Armbruster-Sandoval, 2017).

More recently, in 2015, the University of Missouri's student government helped ignite a protest that ousted top campus leadership. The notable aspect of this successful protest was that it found strength in a national movement spawned by the death of an unarmed Black man, Michael Brown, about 100 miles from the Columbia, Missouri campus (Pearson, 2015). The student government leadership began by lamenting that the campus was plagued with racist and homophobic students and the responses by campus leaders were described as being apathetic at best. In the end, months of demands and activism led the campus' chancellor and the University of Missouri system president resigning in disgrace (2015). This recent example shows that even in an era where disrupting protests are the exception, the issues faced by students frequently intersects directly with national issues. Without the emergence of Black Lives Matter and the international outrage over Mr. Brown's death, it is fair to ask whether the students would have been so successful in having their demands met.

C. The Role of Institutions in Fostering Civic-Minded Students through SGAs

Ultimately, those charged with overseeing campus life, student affairs administrators, possess a moral responsibility for the key role they play in the lives of students. In addition to furthering academic proficiency, Boyle (2013) described the importance of moral education which aims "to produce thinking citizens for a democratic society by using a less direct educational approach and through enhancing judgments and reasoning" (Boyle, 2013, p. 32). Developmental psychology has established that rational moral functioning represents the final stages of development and this occurs during traditionally undergraduate years (2013). Davis (2013) punctuated this notion when she charged student affairs administrators to a create campus "where critical dialogue, self-reflection, and personal responsibility take place. Action must be taken to build a culture of civility and caring" (p. 50). The vitality of the "campus experience" is significant and SGAs are especially well positioned to help their fellow undergraduate students to develop these skills. Further, with campuses becoming increasingly diverse, social justice issues are becoming increasingly salient. The ability of SGAs to make consequential decisions is a matter of procedural justice which is defined as the perception of fairness in decision making processes (Reason & Davis, 2005). The value in ensuring procedural justice within higher education institutions remains fundamental to cognitive development and punctuates how much change has occurred since the *Dixon* decision. More specifically, Reason and Davis (2005) wrote:

> As students move out of a dualistic or received knowledge view of the world, they become more comfortable with multiple perspectives and the subjectivity of authority and knowing. With this important transition comes a new ability to examine different worldviews, understand one's own subjective biases, and more fully understand complex concepts like privilege, oppression, and intersubjectivity associated with social justice ally development (Reason & Davis, 2005, p. 11).

Student governments provide considerable opportunity for students and the campus community as a whole. Astin and Astin (2000) summarized the responsibility of campus leadership to mentor and cultivate participants in shared governance at their institutions:

> Focusing on traditional degree-specific requirements as a major part of higher education's educational mission makes a lot of sense, but it is not enough. Our rapidly changing society desperately needs skilled leaders who are able to address complex issues, build bridges, and heal divisions. Moreover, our students, regardless of their particular career interests or the positions they may eventually hold, also need to learn general life skills (Astin & Astin, 2000, p. 32).

Robinson (2004) described student leaders and many of their responsibilities when participating in student governance this way:

> The responsibilities that the students undertook in their positions were demanding. These ranged from staff management, budgeting and financial decision making, organizational planning and review, public relations, service management, membership outreach, communication with the media, liaison with provincial and national student groups . . . interacting with university administrators, as well as . . . government officials. (p. 117)

Whether the choice is to conduct sit-ins to combat racial injustice, organize antiwar protests, or determining how student fees are distributed, the benefits of participating in an SGA is wide-reaching. Kuh (2009) described participants in SGA as students who typically "interacted more with faculty and diverse peers, studied more, and engaged more frequent in higher order mental activities such a synthesizing material and analyzing problems" (p. 689). These skills are transferrable and lead to the further development and maturation of young adults.

D. Priorities of the Modern Student Government

Student governance can be found on campuses throughout the United States. While external forces may shape each institution differently, there are commonalities that can be seen in almost all these organizations. The similarities observed originate in the basic structure and function of student representation in higher education—a reliance on resources from the

institution and the institution's leadership while simultaneously representing their peers. As

Klemenčič (2014) wrote:

> They exist to intermediate the interests of the student body to an authority, a higher education institution or government. Therefore, student governments inevitably have to relate to that authority, engage with its structures and agenda, and engage in its policy networks. […] At the same time, student governments exist to serve their constituency, the collective student body. (p. 400)

The coexistence of these forces facing SGAs is combined with rapid leadership turnover

compared with other representative bodies since students inevitably complete course work and

graduate. Smith et al. (2016) reviewed what 73 SGAs were prioritizing during formal meetings.

They wrote, "Prevalent topics discussed or voted upon included allocations for student fees,

campus and business life issues, and academic procedures" (2016, p. 46). Much of the priorities

observed by Smith and colleagues (2016) revolved around allocating funds and legislation

related to general student welfare. While resource allocation is commonplace, Miles et al. (2008)

posited that there are 4 primary functions for SGAs. First, SGAs need to operate within the

structure of their internal governing documents. Second, their agenda revolves around the powers

granted to them by an institution's leadership. Third, SGAs need to respond to the powers and

responsibilities that institutional power brokers bestow upon them. Finally, most SGAs are

responsible for appointing students to represent their peers on decision-making committees.

LaForge (2020) summarized the role of many SGAs when he wrote the following:

> Most universities embrace methods to involve students formally in issue discussion, information dissemination, and, to some extent, decision-making regarding policies that affect students and their academic and extracurricular activities (LaForge, 2020, p. 128)

While LaForge (2016) implied that the student body plays a relatively meek role in the process

of shared governance, said participation is hardly inconsequential for the institution and the

student leaders.

The model of higher education in the United States for centuries was one that emphasized that students are learners and faculty utilize the classroom space to be the teachers. We now know, however, that participation in co-curricular activities is deeply impactful on the learning and the maturation process of undergraduate students regardless of the specifics of those activities (Astin & Astin, 2000; Bray, 2006; LaForge, 2020). Being a part of an SGA is an especially potent way to develop leadership qualities in students regardless of the specifics of the issues that are being undertaken. Astin and Astin (2000) wrote that fostering "collaboration, authenticity, shared purpose, [and] commitment" (p. 29) will cultivate leadership in ways that in-classroom learning does not necessarily provide. Moreover, research has shown that students involved with shared governance on their campuses enhance a student's marketability in the workforce, interpersonal skills, and enhanced morality (LeBoeuf, 2020) because dissent and activism spur conflict and ultimately conflict resolution which is a key indicator of a student's development (Biddix, 2014). In summation, the literature strongly indicates that even SGAs that have agendas and policy priorities that are only nominally consequential provide benefit both individually and collectively.

E. Agendas and the University President

The university president has a unique role as the chief executive responsible for tens of thousands of students, thousands of staff and faculty, millions (or billions) in endowment, hundreds of millions of dollars in research expenditures, among many other areas that require oversight. A retired 4-star Navy admiral, William McRaven, remarked after retiring as the University of Texas system president, "The toughest job in the nation is the one of an academic- or health-institution president" (Thomason, 2018, p. para 1). Giving credence to this sentiment, university executives must contend with an organization that is largely decentralized and

autonomous. Further, stakeholders have incredible independence. Faculty largely decide what to teach and by what means they do so. Students can engage academically and through extracurricular activities or they can simply choose neither. Donors and lawmakers will use the power of the purse to persuade or dissuade institutional decisions based on their personal interests and values. Additionally, the presidency can be extremely isolating and can operate in "a bubble" (McNaughtan et al., 2019). This leaves the university president in a situation that will ultimately lead to a failure to please many, if not most, stakeholders when a decision arises leaving them generally weak in terms of having the ability to aggressively address issues. However, despite their inability to enact major policy change, "the [university president] is the single most influential person" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 168) within institutions of higher education. Or as Duderstadt (2007) described, "The very phrases used to characterize academic leadership, such as 'herding cats' or 'moving cemeteries,' suggest the complexity of the university presidency" (p. 106). Effectively communicating a vision can be the most important variable in achieving those goals and ensuring that said influence is used productively.

In a discussion of the modern "business model" utilized in higher education, Ahi (2018) aptly summarized the macro-level organizational challenges that are faced by modern leadership:

> Academic institutions operate in several different markets, including the market for faculty and staff, the student recruitment market, the research funding market, and the post-graduation career market. These have all been changing and are facing heightened competition, an avalanche of new technologies and increased demands for accountability (p. 116).

McGee (2015) went further and outlined several overarching adjustments that leaders within higher education must make. With thousands of institutions of higher education and rapidly enhanced remote-learning technology, higher education has found itself needing to operate similarly to other (more typical) market commodities as they struggle to distinguish themselves

while simultaneously not impacting cost of attendance in the process. From a shared governance perspective, this adds yet another layer to the obstacles that students have when they seek an opportunity to represent their peers through an SGA and for presidents to outline a coherent and trusted agenda.

Universities are anarchical in how they function (Birnbaum, 1988; Cohen et al., 1972). In short, this means that chance and situational specificity are arguably the largest influencers for determining what is prioritized by executive leadership on campuses. More specifically, these anarchical systems rely on a few primary components to be defined as chaotic or anarchial. The first part of this is "problematic goals" established by the institution. By that, Birnbaum (1988); Cohen et al. (1972) wrote of the problematic nature of the vague and often underdeveloped mission found at most colleges and universities. Many colleges may, for example, develop a mission after a program or department already exists instead of building a unit off one's goals. When writing about transformative leadership Kissel (2019) wrote, "Too many institutions (many faculty readers will agree) spend inordinate time repackaging what they are already doing in order to create a strategic plan, mostly to do more of the same but with new catchphrases about embracing the future" (p. 70). The skills required to effectively establish a vision must be more than mere platitudes.

Another tenant of the chaotic institution of higher education is that there are an infinite number of solutions that are constantly in search of problems. These solutions can be fluid and shift frequently drawing fluctuating degrees of attention. Upton and Warshaw (2017) looked extensively at 3 top research institutions and found competing interests driving institutional policy: market and industry-based influence and the long-held, but loosely tied, ethos of the institution itself. They wrote:

Collectively our findings show multiple strategies at play in the universities' responses to concurrent demands of social institution and industry logics…The concept of hybrid or blended logics suggests a promising framework for understanding how universities can and do manage and exploit tensions in their missions (Upton & Warshaw, 2017, p. 100).

An additional component of this chaotic system is the notion of unclear technology. On university campuses, many divergent means of scholarship are undertaken simultaneously. For example, some students find academic success in lab work, while others prefer intimate class settings, and others still may learn best through out-of-classroom opportunities, such as student government (Birnbaum, 1988). The needs of a student in a postdoctoral chemical engineering program are going to contrast the needs of a tenured professor in library sciences. As such, the tools, and resources available cannot be akin to a one-size-fits-all approach.

The final characteristic is an abundance of fluid participation by all stakeholders on a given campus. That is, participation is unpredictable and the largest stakeholders, students, spend a very limited time as members of the community. It is also important to reemphasize the imbalanced influence imparted by various stakeholder groups through philanthropic and/or state funding (Birnbaum, 1988).

Put together, these 4 characteristics, problematic goals, unclear technology, solutions in search of problems, and fluid participation, largely dictate which issues are prioritized in the agenda setting process for institutional leadership (Birnbaum, 1988). The most straightforward-seeming problems can be derailed by a particularly antagonistic group of faculty members, for example. The most complex problems may find their way onto the top of a policy agenda because of a particular solution that has been in search of that specific problem. In the end, however, the president's job is to manage these uncontrollable streams while ensuring communication and knowledge of given issues remains a key priority (Basham, 2012; Eddy, 2010).

There is a discrete body of literature on the field of executive communication. However, there is a large gap in the literature when it comes to studying corporate executives compared to university presidents (McNaughtan et al., 2019). This literature illustrates that presidential communication of their agendas is arguably the most important part of their jobs as the primary campus leader (Basham, 2012; McNaughtan et al., 2019), and it also one of the most challenging. As previously noted, institutions of higher education are comprised of stakeholders with wildly divergent priorities and motives. However, the president's role is to effectively communicate and collaborate with each group in their community to ensure support for their agenda. Eddy (2010) wrote of one of the keys to succeeding with this goal: "By interacting with all campus members—including students—leaders can learn about the context in which they are working, which, in turn, should influence the way that they frame and communicate information to others" (p. 315). The uniqueness of institutions of higher education are such that traditional methods of power and motivation (i.e., financial incentives) are not entirely applicable. Rather, sharing values and strong communication that cultivates those values drive members of a campus community. Campus leadership is ultimately responsible for ensuring that those tenets and ideals are foundational in how the institution is managed (Birnbaum, 1988).

The challenge for presidents is to figure out how to develop their priorities given the chaotic environments that they are charged with leading. There is a limited amount of literature in this area. Taylor et al. (2008), for example, wrote that the most important consideration in developing an agenda is the ability of the leader(s) to effectively communicate goals. Assuming communication is on par, it is essential to establish some form of guiding priorities. They went on to describe how that framework is established:

> One begins with the circumstances of the present, moves into strategic thinking (which can disrupt institutional alignment), focuses on the desired future for the institution

(vision) and then merges these factors into a strategic planning process (that ultimately creates institutional alignment). This evolving cycle is continuous and ongoing (p. 371).

In reflecting on some of his self-described key policies while president of Princeton University, Bowen (2011) echoed the above sentiment. He noted that he could not merely become familiar with a subject, but he needed to master it before moving forward with impactful institutional priorities. McNaughtan et al. (2019) reiterated this notion, "All of the presidents interviewed [for this study] argued that it is vital to be informed about the issue and their audience" (p. 1434). Failure to prioritize that foundational knowledge can markedly erode institutional confidence. Ensuring trust within institutions of higher education cannot be established with financial incentive or threats that are typically found within power structures of complex organizations (Birnbaum, 1988).

The scholarship identifies another commonality that makes agenda setting especially distinctive to college presidents. The attention given to crisis communication (i.e., "putting out fires") is significant, and as such, it is important to have committees of experienced individuals to help craft long-term, non-urgent agendas for the future (McNaughtan & Pal, 2019; McNaughtan et al., 2019). These committees can use their unique expertise and experience to help foresee issues ahead of time to potentially reduce the crisis-nature of presidential communications and provide opportunity to be proactive rather than merely reactive.

Dr. Diana Natalicio began her tenure as the president of the University of Texas, El Paso (UTEP) in 1988 and has discussed the challenges she faced in building a successful research institution that catered to the unique population of students in the Paso del Norte region of the Southwest United States. In an interview on the headwinds faced in establishing her vision, the themes she reflected on parallel with the concepts and challenges presented here. She stated the following:

So I began to articulate a vision of UTEP that was very inclusive and proclaimed our pride in being a Hispanic majority university, which we had just barely become. That vision was initially unsettling to some of our alumni, to our business community, and to many of the faculty. Although the demographics were fairly clear, I was calling for accelerating the university's response to them and speaking proudly about doing that. Some faculty told me directly that being a minority-serving university would not be viewed nationally as a badge of honor. So there was more than a little internal tension at that point. Faculty, as you know, have two allegiances. One is the institution for which they work, and the other is the discipline or profession they identify with. In terms of professional status, many felt that branding UTEP as a minority-serving institution was not going to serve their broader professional stature (Kuh & Natalicio, 2004, p. 11).

Dr. Natalicio spent 31 years as the University's president and has been widely celebrated as a transformative leader who has grown one of the largest majority-Hispanic institutions of higher education in the United States. She was named by Fortune magazine as among the top 50 leaders in the world (University of Texas System, 2021). She fully credited her success over the past 3 decades to a steadfast commitment to changing the culture on the UTEP campus. The evidence strongly suggests a definitive cultural shift indeed occurred. Compared to peer institutions, UTEP's first-year students are more engaged in "higher-order learning, collaborative, learning, and faculty-student interaction" (Natalicio, 2015, p. 34). As she noted, however, her priorities were not necessarily shared by all constituents. While this is inevitable to some degree, it is clear based on her own reflections, the praise received by others, and the data that her vision was ultimately successful and embraced by many.

Dr. Freeman Hrabowski is also among the few demonstrably transformative leaders as president of the University of Maryland Baltimore County. His leadership has spanned more 25 years and has established a hallmark program, the Meyerhoff Scholars Program, that has brought many underrepresented minorities into math and engineering careers (American Council on Education, 2018). More specifically, Hrabowski's program led the nation in minority student STEM undergraduate degree recipients who went on to complete a doctoral degree in math or

science (Hrabowski, 2018). As a leader, he has cited some key reasons for this success.

Hrabowski's undergraduate experience at Hampton Institute taught him "the importance of

putting students first, expecting the most of them. […] Students grow from being challenged

intellectually and receiving support, both academically and personally" (Hrabowski, 2018, p.

101). He further cited cultural change that is focused on ensuring institutions of higher education

are reflective and appropriately responsive to the key demographic changes taking place on

campuses throughout the country. Moreover, the need for constant and unbiased evaluation is

essential. Hrabowski wrote in reflecting on the scholar's program:

> Regular assessments have been invaluable as well. From the start, [the Meyerhoff
> Scholar's Program's] strengths, weaknesses, and outcomes have been rigorously assessed
> by teams of independent experts. In these evaluations, there has been no substitute for
> specificity—knowing how individual students and groups of students are performing in
> specific classes and majors (Hrabowski, 2014, p. 299).

Having intentional and multifaceted assessments allows for the institution to reduce chaos by

minimizing solutions in search of problems and provides a focus on issues outlined by not only

stakeholders, but the analysis of impartial analysts who are less likely to be involved with

internal politics.

The successes of Hrabowski in Maryland and Natalicio in Texas demonstrate how

successful leaders are able to effectively communicate and execute a vision for their campuses,

and looking at failed higher education leaders can further illustrate this point. For example,

Trachtenberg et al. (2013) discussed several case studies related to failed public university

presidents. They concluded that a presidency can be easily derailed when presidents "behave in

infantile and insensitive ways with a range of their constituents" (2013, p. 59). The ability to lead

is based in the notion that a clear vision be established through relationship building with

students and other stakeholders. A failure to establish sufficient social capital on a campus can

lead to failure for even the most seasoned academic leaders (2013). That social capital, as demonstrated in the examples in the chapter, is built upon trust. Tolliver and Murry (2017) expounded on this:

> Perceptions of trust among higher education leaders, particularly influenced by personality, culture, motivation, values, reliability, competence, and intuition, has been found as a key variable that determines successful relationships, as shown in a trust-centered, integrated approach model (2017, p. 12).

Leaders who establish a vision collaboratively utilizing current structures of shared governance will be more likely to realize their goals and establish overall institutional success by tapping into their constituents' aspiration and anxieties (Aldighrir, 2013). Astin and Astin (2000) further noted that skepticism and distrust among a campus community are the primary factor in a leader's ultimate failure.

Another celebrated academic leader, Dr. John Hennessy, spent more than 15 years as the president of Stanford University. His reflections of his time in that role provide additional support for the important factors that go into crafting a successful vision for an institution of higher education. When discussing how to build coalitions among stakeholders and realizing transformative leadership, he wrote, "Empathy represents a crucial check on action—placing a deep understanding of and concern for the human condition next to data can lead to decisions that support the well-being of all" (Hennessy, 2018, p. 52). Elucidating upon the need for innovation, he implored future leaders in academia to refrain from micromanaging. Institutions of higher education have an incredible advantage compared with industries driven solely by profit and market capitalization; universities are not solely market-driven and still encompass some of the most brilliant and curious minds. With that, according to Hennessy (2018), a president's job is to inspire but subsequently "get out of the way" to allow innovation to unfold.

When studying leadership qualities of university presidents based on their level of experience upon assuming the role, Neumann (1989) found that a top-down, management-oriented approach was most likely at the early part of one's tenure and subsequently gave way to approaches that allow for flexibility, shared governance, and willingness to adjust priorities to best reflect current internal and external issues. Miles (2018) summarized this concept well: "Students are participating in higher education to learn and grow, and they are there to earn a degree, not be given a degree. Presidents must be intentional in their work to assist students as they progress toward their goals" (p. 2).

F. Agenda Setting, Collaborative Policymaking, and Policy Implementation

The idea of agenda setting is a relatively new field of study first appearing in the mid-twentieth century. Dahl's (1961) writings put forward one of the first theories on how power is exerted within communities using observable decision-making. Shortly thereafter, Bachrach and Baratz (1962) published a critique of Dahl's methodology with an alternate focus on the *lack of* decision-making in the public arena. Gaventa (1982) built upon these writings with an examination of agenda setting through the relationships between those with power and those without it. Together, these frameworks establish the 3 faces of power.

Dahl's (1961) research is specifically focused on the workings of New Haven, Connecticut, and its government. Dahl first established that power equals A's ability to force B to do something that B may not have otherwise done. Dahl's focus was found in observations of concrete, notable government actions. He sought out the specific individuals who participated in notable agenda setting processes and reviews what actions that they ultimately undertook and why. Worth emphasizing is that Dahl's observations were seemingly intentional (cherry-picked), failing to specify what is worthy of analysis and why. Subsequently, the analysis shifts to a

review of what the end-result looks like. Dahl's review was focused on 3 primary areas in New Haven: the parties' nominating processes, zoning decisions, and decisions about educational systems. The methodology that he utilized and advocated for focused on the tangible and observable. He declared that this was the only way to study the agenda setting process successfully and scientifically.

Bachrach and Baratz (1962) similarly critiqued Dahl's (1961) work and his methodology. They were quick to establish that what Dahl was undertaking was exceptionally surface-level and thus was filled with limitations. In other words, they seemingly decried Dahl's scholarship to be akin to a marine biologist observing marine life exclusively from above the water. Instead, it is vital to look at, the "two-faces of power." First, one must analyze a given political landscape and the specific morals and values that are foundational therein. While Dahl's definition of power remained true, Bachrach and Baratz (1962) sought to also establish the fact that A is also exerting power by advancing a political culture that excludes B from being influential. Using the example of redevelopment from Dahl's work, they regarded the concept that only direct, specific, and observable actions by the mayor and his administrators are what should be examined when determining reasons for exerting power. For them, however, one must consider potential actions *not* taken by city officials for fear of backlash from elites. This can take the form of campaign finance contributions (or lack thereof), and/or public rebuke. The concept of inaction is the second face of power.

The current iteration of student governments on the campuses of institutions of higher education took root in the 1960s (Golden & Schwartz, 1994). This is in line with the rise of citizen interest groups that cropped up around the same time period. Fagotto and Fung (2006) took the notion a step further when they wrote that born out of these social movements was a

push to increase stake-holder participation in government which "emphasizes horizontal collaboration among public […] citizens as opposed to more hierarchical bureaucratic models" (2006, p. 639). They went on to note that providing direct fiscal opportunities to citizen groups increases participation and cultivates political organizing (Fagotto & Fung, 2006). This notion parallels with student governments and their agendas. Research has demonstrated that one of the most consistent priorities for SGAs is to authorize spending of student activity fees (which are allocated to them by campus administrators) (Smith et al., 2016). The ability to access and re-distribute fiscal resources is empowering and provides a foundation for the existence of SGAs in the same way that citizen interest groups engage in participatory governance (Fagotto & Fung, 2006). The value of the comparison between an SGA and other interest groups will provide fertile ground to future research that seeks to understand how and why certain issues are undertaken and why certain issues are not.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Analyzing Student Government Associations, their priorities, agendas, actions, and experiences with campus leadership provides insight into the extent to which power and authority are shared between administrators and elected student leaders. This understanding established acumens into how institutions of higher educations maximize their organizational mission, augmenting the educational experience for students while simultaneously ensuring the institution is effectively managed. This chapter will review the research design, sample, instrumentation, and collection and analysis of data. It will conclude with an overall summary.

A. Research Design

A qualitative approach was taken in this study. More specifically, a thematic analysis of documentation produced by 8 Student Government Associations (SGAs) and their corresponding campus leaders was undertaken in conjunction with semi-structure interviews. Broadly, qualitative data collection was selected for a few key reasons. First, providing policy makers with detail-laden narrative is considerably more influential than strictly quantitative data. As Sallee and Flood (2012) wrote, "stories provide policymakers with their greatest leverage in trying to pass legislation" (2012, p. 140). Second, because this study reviewed the shared governance of very divergent and distinctive groups—undergraduate students and university executives—one of the most effective ways to portray the findings is through a narrative that speaks the same language as the policymaker. More specifically, in the realm of higher education research, the study itself is eye-opening to both students and campus leaders, helping to build bridges between the (Sallee & Flood, 2012).

The document analysis was the first phase of the study, followed by the interviews with the SGA presidents during the academic year in question. Yanow (2006) described the benefits of conducting the study in this way:

> Documents can provide background information […] prior to conducting interviews. They may corroborate observational and interview data— or they may refute them, in which case the researcher is "armed" with evidence that can be used to clarify or, perhaps, to challenge what he is being told, a role that observational data may also play (Yanow, 2006, p. 411).

As Owen (2014) outlined in his discussions of this methodology, policy research will always focus on primary sources of information: documentation and people. The shared reality of the individuals impacted by a given policy or set of policies is essential to the study of everything from agenda setting to policy evaluation.

Analyzing public policy remains a relatively innovative scholarly endeavor. Simply put, lawmakers and institutional leaders exist in systems that are extremely fluid and rapidly changing. As policymakers, they can be victims of circumstance, adjusting to many competing situations and variables. This causes any subsequent academic policy analysis to have a high risk of irrelevancy. (Hillman et al., 2015). More directly, Keller (1985) described research into higher education policy as almost completely useless. When he described academic conferences in the field, he wrote that, "boredom is almost palpable, new ideas and important findings, skimpy, the conversation friendly but commonplace" (1985, p. 7). He went on to urge future higher education policy research to focus heavily and almost-exclusively on what is germane and applicable. Failure to do so is borderline immoral because poor policy can hinder one's inherent right to be educated (1985). Herein, I will outline why the study of Student Governmental Associations and their relationships with the presidents of their institutions is relevant, timely, and will likely lead to helpful insights that can be translated into tangible action. Shared

governance within institutions of higher education can be foundational to how well an institution succeeds in a climate that is extremely competitive.

B. Sample

Institutions of Higher Education

This study sought to analyze 8 public land grant institutions of higher education that serve as the flagship institution of their respective state, and their Student Government Associations (SGA) from the 4 regions of the United States (2 institutions per region) as established by the United States Census Bureau. These regions (see appendix b) have been utilized in every decennial census since 1900 and were established, according to the Geographic Areas Reference Manual to

> …provide large units that are roughly similar in terms of historical development, population characteristics, economy, and the like. As a result, the regions and divisions serve not only to summarize data for the same groups of States over a long period of time, but also to provide a larger geographic framework for comparative statistical analysis. (United States Census Bureau, 2018, p. 6)

Public land grant institutions were chosen for the historical impact they have had on higher education in the United States. More specifically, as described by Marcus (2015):

> [Public land grant institutions] produced the country's scientific, technical, and agricultural leaders, spawned innovations that changed the face of the nation, and helped create the modern world. […] Industries and businesses rose because of research done at these places, which helped fuel the postwar boom that made America the leader of the free world (Marcus, 2015, p. 1).

As this study examined one of the most democratic aspects of post-secondary educational institutions, it is appropriate that one of the most successfully implemented federally-funded educational programs was the basis for data collection.

Land-grant institutions allow for the researcher to collectively review a group of institutions founded with similar missions and commitments to enhancing public higher

education (Anonymous, 2012). However, as other studies of land-grant institutions have indicated (Bridges, 2013), Hispanic Serving and Historically Black Colleges and Universities do not hold the same historical mission and values, establishing a noticeable contrast with non-HBCU and Hispanic serving institutions. Additionally, their students only represent a small sample of all students attending land-grant institutions across the entire U.S. (2013). As such, they were explicitly excluded.

Flagship institutions were utilized due to key variables that are common among them. According to Douglass (2016), they share the following attributes:

- Comprehensive institutions: heavy focus on research and "focused on regional and national relevancy" (2016, p. 5);

- Broadly accessible: balancing recruitment and retention of top-tier students while simultaneously seeking to create access that contributes to "socioeconomic mobility and [reducing] inequality" (p. 5);

- Educating the next generation of leaders: contributing heavily towards cultivating students who will serve as leaders and advancing scholarship in a variety of fields;

- Highly autonomous: while relying on public funds, they are not mandated to adjust priorities based on politics;

- Management capacity: able to function as a multi-faceted institution that is also focused on consistent organizational improvement;

- Economic engagement: participating and influencing economic development for their region through service and research-based initiatives;

- Leaders in larger higher education systems: providing influence and benchmarks for other institutions of higher education in their state and region.

These characteristics (Douglass, 2016) are synchronistic with the research aims of this study. More specifically, shared governance between SGAs and executive leadership within these institutions are persistently balancing stakeholder needs that revolve around these similar characteristics.

C. Instrumentation

Document analysis followed by semi-structured interviews was conducted to determine the alignment of institutional priorities between the president/chancellor and the institution's iteration of a student government association. The questions will be found in appendix c. These codes and questions were piloted in an interview with the student body president of the University of Arkansas' Associated Student Government. They were adjusted when found to be irrelevant or not especially germane to the goals of the study.

D. Data Collection

The priorities for the institution of higher education's president/chancellor were found on the institution's primary website with assistance from Google or through other journalistic sources. Source material was found in the form of a "state of the University" address, a list of guiding priorities or principles, and other parallel information. This information was coded utilizing NVivo software. The codes categorized the institutional priorities based on overarching identifiable categories such as teaching, safety, institutional growth, research, etc. so that they compared with priorities of the SGA which were be established through document analysis and semi-structured interviews. These categories were based on nearly a decade of experience working and studying at the University of Arkansas.

Within these institutions of higher education, the president of the respective student government association was found and located using the institutions website or a general search

utilizing Google. Contact was then initiated via e-mail to establish willingness to participate in the study. Six semi-structured interviews took place. Following the critical thematic analysis of SGA's official documents alongside documentation from campus senior leadership, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with the president of the SGA from the chosen institution. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow for a structured conversation that emphasizes the priorities of the interviewer (Brinkmann, 2014). The interviews were conducted via Zoom and they were be recorded. I took field notes throughout the interviews. Thereafter, utilizing internal Zoom software and NVivo software, a transcript of the interviews was created. That transcript was sent to the interviewee for review and to note any edits and to formally indicate that the transcript is representative of interview. At this point, utilizing my field notes and transcript, I reviewed and analyzed the contents.

As the following research questions demonstrate, "interviewers are normally seeking descriptions of how interviewees experience the world, its episodes and events, rather than speculations about why they have certain experiences" (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 287). The interviews sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How did elected student government leaders at select land grant universities describe their organizational agendas and priorities?

2. At the same institutions, what agendas and priorities were identified by institutional leadership documents?

3. To what extent were the student government and institutional leadership agendas and priorities aligned?

4. How did student body presidents describe their working relationship with their respective institutional leader and does that impact agenda alignment?

E. Data analysis

The success of shared governance is contingent on how university leadership chooses to engage with their students. As McKaig (1999) wrote, the basic underlying philosophies of student governance rests on the approaches utilized by leadership: "there-there," "public relations," "consumer relations," and "collaboration" (1999, p. 1). These categories range from being overly paternalistic and dismissive to embodying a truer sense of shared governance that may include only mild supervision. In short, the power rests with institutional leadership and students are therefore at a clear disadvantage in terms of the power they have on their campuses. In attempting to answer the aforementioned questions, critical theory will serve as the primary approach. Critical theory was chosen since it emphasizes the point-of-view and values held by both the interviewer and participants. Critical theory specifically seeks tangible actions that both parties can undertake to help derive appropriate solutions (Greason, 2018). "Participants and researchers establish a collaborative relationship as they ask critical questions about the current life situation. This dialogue moves the group to action as they develop knowledge and further explore the problem and how it can be addressed" (Spencer et al., 2014, p. 91). Furthermore, critical theorists acknowledge that the likely results of using this theory will establish power differentiation between the groups being studied (Spencer et al., 2014).

One of the other key components of critical theory is "empirical ethics." Greason (2018) wrote, "Empirical ethics argues that theories cannot be arbitrarily developed outside of the practice context" (p. 3). This was especially true when studying arenas with limited scholarship (2018). This was certainly the case with available literature as it relates to SGAs on US campuses (Smith et al., 2016). The onus was therefore on the researcher to develop conclusions based on direct discussions with those being studied so that policy recommendations and

changes can be clear and convincing. Additionally, while similarities exist between the chosen

land-grant institutions, the context by which shared governance was conducted varied and policy

analysis was malleable and adjusted accordingly (Greason, 2018).

      As with the critical thematic analysis (CTA) of internal SGA and university documents,

the transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using the same framework.

This allowed for a detailed, content-rich discussion of the shared reality among the top student

leaders within an SGA; that reality was established within a certain historical and social context

that can only be effectively established by conducting interviews and connecting with the

subjects of the research (Owen, 2014). Yanow (2006) was clear to point out that interpretative

research is not maximally effective via quantitative methods since the interviewer "seeks to draw

the speaker out" (p. 410) in order to gain an effective understanding of said shared reality. This is

considerably more difficult in strict and uniform data collection conducted quantitatively. A

common example to demonstrate the value of context and shared reality is looking at research of

student success. That is, one can easily see quantitatively that a certain number of students were

unsuccessful in a given course. However, that data does not provide the researcher with any

actual understanding about what may have contributed to that situation (Sallee & Flood, 2012).

The same was applicable within this study of shared governance since the individual situations

facing SGA leadership were going to directly contribute to the 3 streams that comprise the

Garbage Can Model (Cohen et al., 1972).

      The complexity of institutions of higher education allowed for an easy application of

Cohen's (1972) scholarship on the Garbage Can Model (GCM). The GCM rests on the premise

of a chaotic organization undertaking agenda setting via "3 streams" flowing into a proverbial

garbage can: problems, solutions, and politics. With limited ability to address all policy

questions, this study provides the reader with an understanding of how agenda setting occurs within institutions higher education and the individuals who purportedly operate under some notion of shared governance. It's important to analyze the policy agendas of elected student leaders and university presidents and establish how the 3 streams are impacted by shared governance, if at all.

F. Summary

This chapter outlines the key components of this qualitative study of Student Government Associations. A qualitative approach is utilized as the field of public policy in general, and higher education policy more specifically, benefit from empirical research that is germane and timely to relevant stakeholders. I will utilize content thematic analysis of SGA agendas and minutes alongside the institution's priorities as outlined by their chancellor/president. Additionally, semi-structured interviews will take place with a group of SGA presidents to help analyze the content thematic analysis in more detail. The institutions being reviewed are land grant flagship institutions of higher education that represent each region in the United States as defined by the United States Census Bureau.

The following are the criteria utilized to select the institutions and SGA presidents utilized for this study:

- Public institutions of higher education that were established via the Morrill Act of 1862 or the Agricultural College Act of 1890. The institution must also serve as the state's flagship university;

- One or two institutions per geographic region as established by the United States Census Bureau for a total of 6 to 8; and

- Available documentation and willingness for the SGA president to be interviewed.

If a chosen institution fails to have one of these components available, another institution that fits the criteria will be utilized.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter will contain a comprehensive summary of the study of Student Government Associations and their administrative counterparts at institutions of higher education. The purpose of the research is established in addition to a detailed overview of the methodology employed. The answers to the 4 research questions are subsequently outlined along with a general overview of the data collected.

A. Introduction

Within institutions of higher education, shared governance is an essential component to a healthy functionality. Among the many stakeholders at these institutions, students are the largest in number and hold primacy. Astin and Astin (2000) wrote that students have an essential responsibility to engage in shared governance. Participation in student governance establishes a sense of shared ownership over their communities while also providing a unique avenue for students to gain wisdom related to civic engagement for life after the completion of a post-secondary degree (Kouba, 2018). Boyle (2013) wrote that in-classroom learning is by itself insufficient to accomplish these goals; students must be provided opportunity to enhance their reasoning skills and to learn productive conflict resolution tools. What's more, senior administrators at these institutions have many inherent challenges due to an organization that is largely decentralized and autonomous (Duderstadt, 2007). Successful student governance, and thus the success of instructional shared governance, can provide these leaders with an essential tool in most effectively leading these complex institutions.

The purpose for conducting this study was to analyze Student Government Associations in order to establish how they describe their policy priorities and how those priorities align with the primacies of their institutional leadership. Additionally, the study reviewed how student

leaders described their working relationships with their institution's president and whether that impacted agenda setting for either stakeholder. This research helps future leaders of SGAs as well as current and future institutional presidents effectively cultivate these working relationships to provide a post-secondary education that is maximally beneficial.

A qualitative approach was taken to the study via thematic analysis of documents produced by 8 Student Government Associations at land-grant institutions of higher education. Land-grant institutions have uniquely impacted the scientific and technological innovations in the United States since the late nineteenth century and continue to do so currently (Marcus, 2015). More importantly, however, land-grant institutions have made higher education accessible to the masses; their students make an ideal subject for scholarship of public policy and agenda setting (2015). The 8 institutions were chosen based upon geographical regions as established by the United States Census bureau. These regions are described as having similar populations and historical development (United States Census Bureau, 2018).

Braun and Clarke (2012) established that thematic analysis of documents is a strong tool when conducting qualitative research. As such, official meeting minutes from SGAs were analyzed from each institution. Document analysis was implemented due to its ability to provide relevant background prior to interviews (Yanow, 2006). Thereafter, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 student body presidents from the aforementioned land-grant institutions. Employing critical theory in analyzing this qualitative data allowed for the values and perspectives of the subjects, along with notions of power differentiation, to be of particular importance (Spencer et al., 2014). Thematic analysis through document review was further utilized in establishing the policy and agenda priorities of institutional leaders through state of the university addresses, media interviews, and direct statements.

B. Data Collection

  Eight land-grant, flagship institutions of higher education were chosen for the study. Two institutions were chosen per region as defined by the US Census Bureau (2018): West, Midwest, South, and Northeast. Utilizing Google and institutional websites, a sample of convenience was established. Many Student Government Associations did not have accessible or up-to-date official documents available for analysis. Furthermore, an institution with a permanent chancellor/president was sought for purposes of continuity in governance and to ensure that the stated policy priorities would be unlikely to shift suddenly.

  Official meeting minutes for Student Government Associations from the Fall 2021 semester were reviewed and coded via thematic analysis as defined by Braun and Clarke (2012). Coding was done via NVIVO software. Matters were coded if they were discussed by an officer's report or if a specific action or legislation was introduced and debated. At the onset of the document analysis, deductive reasoning was utilized to establish a codebook. For example, given the status of the COVID-19 pandemic during fall 2021, discussions related to immunization and mask mandates were assumed to be likely topics of SGA business. Additionally, I utilized past and current academic and professional experiences to deduce additional codes. During the process of coding the 8 institutions, inductive logic was employed to code and establish themes among the SGAs. The number of meeting minutes varied from 6 to 14 per institution, with half of them containing 11 (corresponding with the number of weeks in the semester minus scheduled time off). For the SGAs that met less frequently, their documents tended to be longer and denser with agenda items. With the exception of one institution, the amount of data coded was consistent throughout averaging approximately 150 coded references per institution.

Utilizing the institutional websites for each SGA, the student body president was contacted at each university. While 8 replied to the recruitment correspondence 2 out of the 8 ceased communication and were not ultimately interviewed. The 2 institutions in the Northeast region were not interviewed. Each interview was conducted via Zoom and recorded using the same software. All 6 presidents interviewed were male-presenting and their semester at the time of the interview was second semester of their senior year with the exception of 1 Western student body president who was a second semester junior. The interviews ranged from approximately 19 minutes in length to approximately 51 minutes. On average, the interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. The audio files from the recording where transcribed using NVIVO's transcription software. Each participant was provided a copy of the transcript to review and correct any transcription errors.

In determining the policy priorities for institutional presidents, a variety of documents were utilized. All of the data gathered was from the fall 2021 semester. When possible, data was gathered from a "state of the university" address due to the fact that the general purpose of such an address is to update the community on the progress of policy priorities and to establish future priorities. Among the 8 institutions, 4 had with such addresses available for review and analysis: 2 from the Midwest, 1 from the South, and 1 from the West. The address from the president at the institution in the South was in the form of an audio file that was transcribed using NVIVO transcription software and coded. One institution in the Midwest provided a verbatim transcript on their website, the other Midwestern university provided a copy of a PowerPoint presentation, and the institution in the West provided a textual summary of the address.

In the event that such an address was not available, a record of direct communication to the campus community during the Fall 2021 semester was sought. For 2 of the institutions, one

from the South and one from the Northeast, a collection of university-wide communications were collected from their institutional websites and coded. One Southern institution had 11 such statements and 1 Northeastern institution provided 5 direct messages to the campus community. The remaining 2 institutions did not have easily accessible documents that would allow for policy priorities to be clearly established and coded. As such, using the search feature on the website of the campus-run periodical, the names of the respective presidents' names were searched for the specified semester. For one of the institutions in the West, the periodical provided a detailed interview with their president in which questions specifically related to policy priorities were explored. The institution in the Northeast did not provide substantive information via the campus-run periodical. As such, Google News was used to search for this administrator and an interview from the fall 2021 semester was found from a major regional newspaper. These interviews were subsequently coded to establish themes related to policy priorities.

C. Research Questions

Question 1: How did elected student government leaders at select land grant universities describe their organizational agendas and priorities?

A variety of policy priorities emerged in both the semi-structured interviews as well as the document analysis of SGA meeting minutes. Although, never mentioned during interviews as a specific policy priority, the documental analysis established clearly that internal organizational management consumed a significant amount of time. More specifically, with approximately 1,350 individual references coded, approximately 530 were related to management of the organization itself. These references included matters of nominations, committee structure, leadership responsibilities, and the sanctioning of sitting officers.

Campus infrastructure was the next most prominent discussion. These particular policy priorities were reflected by some of the interview subjects, but a majority of the coded references were found within meeting minutes. These policy priorities included extensive capital projects, parking and transit issues, and providing updated technology for a select group of classrooms or campus buildings. The student body president from an institution in the West noted the challenges that his institution was facing related to university housing and a rising real estate market:

> The biggest [policy issue] for us is housing for students. So, [city name] is the town that our university is in, and in the last few years had an incredible increase in housing prices. I think like 60 percent [increase] in six months or just something wild. And so that's been a real challenge for students is to find housing off campus. Our university has done a lot of work to build new dorms. I mean, they built two like 500 or so person dorms in the last two years, so they're building like crazy. But for us, a lot of students live off campus as well. And that's been a real difficulty is to compete in with the [city name] housing market.

Issues related to making campuses more environmentally sustainable were also brought up in 3 of the 6 interviews. For example, one institution in the West worked with their facilities management team to replace gas-powered leaf blowers with battery operated leaf blowers. Alongside policy related to environmentally conscious infrastructure, multiple institutions further discussed the notion of divestment from corporations in the fossil fuel industry.

Thereafter, it was established that matters related to campus wellness were the next most prominent point of discussions within the documents and as stated by student body presidents to me during interviews. Wellness issues ranged from student mental health, COVID-19 protocol, sexual assault, and public safety on or around a campus. Mental health was brought up by a majority of the interview subjects. Student mental health was viewed as the number one issue facing their campus for both institutions in the Midwest and one in the West. Specifically, they

sought to combat rising rates of suicide among students. The study body president from the West

stated:

> I would say one that I've really started to realize, I've always realized the importance of it, but I think I really started understanding it and kind of started focusing a little bit more on it during the pandemic would be like mental health. I think a lot of senators and myself and executives are very, very big on making sure people have the accessibility to get mental health resources and, you know, help and kind of supporting them throughout the whole process. So we've really tried.

Mental health was specifically noted nearly 50 times throughout official meeting minutes.

Similarly, physical wellness and safety in general was mentioned 75 times throughout the

documents and referenced 4 times among interview subjects. Notes taken during the interviews

by me also demonstrate the emphasis on wellness and other safety issues. Issues related to

campus lighting were commonly referenced. Relations with law enforcement demonstrated some

contrast, however. For example, an institution in West noted that it was a priority for local law

enforcement to remain off campus due to past conflicts, while a Midwestern student body

president was actively working to create a partnership between campus law enforcement and

local law enforcement.

Each SGA was found to be institutionally tasked with some manner of distribution of

student activity fee moneys. This took the form of student-focused programming and events.

While only one student body president mentioned this as a specific priority during interviews, it

was among the most prominent coded agenda items within official SGA documents with nearly

150 references across each institution. The meeting minutes noted a variety of programming

including mental health awareness, diversity and inclusion-related events, and holiday

celebrations. A student body president in the West described student programming post-COVID-

19 shutdowns as a key element of his tenure in office. With the exception of organizational

management, programming matters had the largest discrepancy between the semi-structured

interviews and document analysis with the vast majority appearing in the documents, but not mentioned in the interviews.

Campus issues related to matters of diversity were commonly described by student body presidents as key policy priorities and this was somewhat reflected within the analyzed documents. Policy related to diversity, equity, and inclusion was referenced nearly 100 times throughout meeting minutes and by 4 of the 6 student body presidents during interviews. These descriptions included multiple references to the notion of "belonging" and ensuring that those tasked with diversity-related matters at the administrative level on a campus were adequately fulfilling their duties as diversity officers.

Unlike the conflict-ridden 1960s, Student Government Associations demonstrated an aversion to direct advocacy for issues not specifically related to their campus community. The student body presidents were asked directly about this and frequently noted a strong desire to avoid alienating students on campus who may disagree with a position, or the particular policy being advocated by their elected student government. For example, 2 Southern institutions were both confronted with being asked to take sides on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in the Middle East. Both student body presidents noted deep confliction regarding the issue and significant pressure from student organizations on both sides of the issue. That specific issue and the contentious nature of it made both student leaders want to avoid especially controversial issues in the future. That said, most of the student body presidents noted organizational support for combating racism and supporting broader movements such as Black Lives Matter. One president described these issues as being "human rights" issues and he was therefore willing to risk alienating students regarding these topics. Another noted that he "didn't care" if racists were upset with him for advocating for certain social justice issues.

Themes

1. General policy implementation in the form of regular business was found to be what Student Government Associations spent the most time on. Each student body president noted that their duties included frequent attendance at a wide variety of committee meetings and individual meetings with a variety of campus stakeholders. Document analysis established this further with the fact that approximately one third of all coded references were related to internal business such as nominations, discussions related to SGA officer obligations, changes to by-laws, and budget management.

2. Student wellness was found to be a significant priority for all of the interview subjects with the exception of a Western institution. Policy issues related to wellness included campus sexual assault, COVID-19, student mental health, and campus safety. Mental health and campus safety established a plurality in the meeting documents as well as interviews. Instances of death by suicide were described as the driving motivation behind a desire to increase available services. Campus safety was related to pedestrian safety, property crimes, and, more broadly, a desire for students to feel safe while being on campus, especially late in the night.

3. Campus infrastructure was further identified as a prominent theme particularly within the analyzed documents. These priorities were focused upon environmentally sustainable structures, parking availability, grounds improvements, and the upgrading of building facilities and technology. Two of the 6 interview subjects specifically referenced improvements to campus libraries as a focus for their SGA. Student housing was referenced by one student body president and noted in meeting minutes and one Northeastern institution focused on housing matters more than any other single policy.

Ensuring students can efficiently and safely utilize bicycles and scooters was also noted

in a majority of meeting minutes.

Therefore, this study has found that elected student government leaders at selected land-grant

institutions describe their policy priorities as implementing institutional policies related to

internal organization and management, student wellness, and campus infrastructure

improvements.

Question 2: At the same institutions, what agendas and priorities were identified by institutional leadership documents?

When analyzing the priorities of the presidents of the same public land-grant institutions,

a number of observations can be made. To start, out of approximately 350 coded references

found among documents outlining policy priorities, the prominent topic was related to

institutional research and innovation with approximately 75 individual references. It was notable

that several presidents spent a considerable amount of time discussing a specific area of research

in which that institution excels above others. For example, a president from a Southern

institution discussed being a leader in cybersecurity research. A president from a Midwestern

university sought to prioritize the unique diagnostic imaging capabilities housed on their campus.

A unique bioscience incubator was noted by a president from a Western institution. These

discussions establish the means by which institutional leadership seeks to distinguish themselves

among their peers. Only one institution from the Northeast failed to articulate a specific research

vision within the documents reviewed and coded.

In addition to prioritizing institutional distinctiveness in research, ensuring faculty are

being awarded external research funding from federal agencies was prominent. With the

exception of one institution in the Northeast, each university took time to demonstrate how much

it values receiving these awards. In one example, the president of a Midwestern university lauded the creation of a new institute through a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF): "[Midwestern university] also has been awarded a $15 million grant from the NSF to lead the creation of an interdisciplinary institute and establish a new field that has the potential to transform biomedical, agricultural and basic biological sciences." The same president later noted $55 million in combined grants awarded to faculty in the school of medicine.

However, it was notable that none of the institutions provided specific praise to graduate students for their research contributions. Of the 15 coded references related to graduate students or graduate programs, only one institution referenced specific initiatives aimed at benefiting graduate students. From an institution in the South, said priorities centered on an increase in funding as well as new programs to focus on professional development seminars. Only 3 other universities specifically referenced graduate students at all and did so with very generalized policy priorities. For example, a president from a Midwestern institution noted that it was important to work towards, "Placement of graduate students and postdocs in key academic, industry, government positions." No further details were provided. This observation was further noted in notes taken utilizing the NVIVO software for coding. Considering the role of graduate students in conducting research, the omission was prominent.

Campus improvements and capital projects were prominent in the analyzed documents. Discussions related to new buildings, renovations, and technological improvements were referenced approximately 40 times. When discussing campus infrastructure, institutional leaders described a variety of specific goals. For example, one institution in the Northeast lauded its work on have an environmentally substantiable campus per rankings established by the environmental advocacy organization The Sierra Club. A president from a Southern university

prioritized renovations to multiple academic buildings and renaming said buildings after former African American students. In further contrast, the president from a Western institution noted the importance of an upcoming construction project for a new student wellness center.

Outside of research, fundraising, and campus infrastructure improvements, some areas were noted for their lack of prominence. For example, only one institution referenced campus sexual assault, an issue that has garnered considerable media attention in recent years (Patel & Roesch, 2018). This particular president released 3 specific statements to the campus community on the subject. Otherwise, the topic went unmentioned by the other 7 institutions reviewed. Additionally, mental health and well-being were only referenced a total of 5 times, but each reference came from a different president. Similarly, issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion were referenced by 6 of 8 institutions. However, the total references only amounted to approximately 15.

Themes

1. There was a considerable policy focus for each institution on making note of past research achievements and establishing future research endeavors as being a top priority. The research and innovation took a variety of forms including private-sector partnerships, the amount of federal dollars awarded through grants, and highlighting areas of research by which the institution uniquely excels at.

2. The campus leaders were also found to place a high priority in improving campus infrastructure. Most of the documents analyzed emphasized a desire for a more sustainable campus and technological improvements for students and/or laboratory equipment. Otherwise, individual campus needs were prioritized by the individual institutional leaders and ranged from a new student health center, major renovations of

academic buildings, and enhancements for research facilities. Discussions of capital

improvements were at times combined with discussions of past or future development

campaigns.

3. The lack of focus on a few specific policy priorities was also of note. Compared to

infrastructure projects and research goals, there was minimal discussion of campus sexual

assault, student mental health, and campus diversity. These issues were mentioned

ambiguously if at all.

Therefore, at the same institutions, the agenda and policy priorities for campus leadership as

identified by institutional documents centers on advancing research output through grants from

federal agencies and improving the campus infrastructure typically through private donations.

Question 3: To what extent were the student government and institutional leadership

agendas and priorities aligned?

When comparing the alignment of agenda priorities between Student Government

Associations and their respective institutional presidents, one key alignment can be determined.

Policy implementation as it relates to improving campus infrastructure was an issue that was

addressed by each university's SGA's official minutes. Multiple student body presidents also

specifically labeled these issues as an issue that was prioritized during the interviews. For

example, the student body president for an institution in the South noted the need for a new

library and this discussion was also shown to be a significant priority throughout the coded

minutes. He stated, "The library is one building where the views that the students keep saying

how much they have a disgust for." He went on to note that he believed his institution's president

shared that same priority. However, this was not shown to be a priority based upon the

documents reviewed. Another example can be found in the infrastructure priorities for the

institution's president and student body president from a university in the West. Both leaders acknowledged the significant importance for additional on-campus housing to be provided for students.

The notion of the improvement of campus buildings and technology was certainly an issue that generally aligned between these key institutional stakeholders, the specific goals for improvements tended to differ somewhat. For example, students mentioned parking and transit issues in the analyzed documents 60 times. Only one reference to parking and transit was found in the institutional leadership documents. Furthermore, presidents devoted much time to describing research accomplishments and priorities and the means by which new technologies and building space has helped implement those policies. Interviews and document analysis showed that scholarly research was not an issue SGAs prioritized.

The emphasis on campus sexual assault was an extremely high priority for students. Three student body presidents noted that sexual assault prevention and adjudication were among their top priorities. Only one university president addressed the issue. However, it was addressed prominently by this president in a media interview and within 3 direct campus-wide communications. The student body president at the same university also described sexual assault as the campus' primary issue. Similarly, campus safety in general was discussed in 4 out of 6 interviews as being a major focal point for the SGA. Issues of general campus safety were further noted in the documents of each SGA more than 70 individual times. Institutional presidents, however, only referenced the issue a total of 10 times further establishing a contrast in policy priorities.

What is most noteworthy regarding the alignment—or lack thereof—between institutional presidents and student body presidents is that many of the students noted in their

interviews that they did not anticipate any such alignment. For example, a student from an

institution in the West said the following:

> It's like it's just different rules, right? Like, the end of the day, like, I'm supposed to advocate for students and, like, worry about rising tuition. At the end of the day, he has to advocate for the tuition to rise so that everything can be satisfied. So, we're going to butt heads.

Similarly, the student body president from the other institution in the West noted the same but

clarified that diverging policy priorities don't interfere with shared governance:

> I think in general, we have similar sort of overall goals, but there's some things that I think are an acute pain to students that are not that grand of an issue for her… so there's sort of a little bit of different framing there. But like one thing that's really awesome about our president is she's like, she doesn't make calls without, you know, like make decisions without first, really at least like understanding the viewpoints of stakeholders.

Along the same lines, several interview subjects specifically noted the fact that their institution's

presidents have external pressure from state legislators and members of the board of trustees.

They acknowledged that this could impact a leader's priorities but does not necessarily alter their

overarching values when it comes to determining agenda priorities. Notes taken during each

interview reinforce this notion. Four out of the 6 student body presidents specifically noted the

challenges faced due to external stakeholders such as state legislatures and boards of trustees.

Themes

1. President of select land-grant universities and their respective Student Government
   Associations align when it comes to an underlying desire for improved campus
   infrastructure and to make the campus more environmentally sustainable. However, in
   most circumstances, the specific priorities converge. That is, students tend to focus on
   more immediate concerns and lack concern for improvements that benefit scholarly
   research. University presidents tended to focus heavily on improvements that will
   enhance research as well as other more long-term improvements.

2. As reflected in the document analysis and interviews, Student Government Associations tend to have concerns regarding campus sexual assault and other overall safety issues. This contrasted significantly with institutional presidents as neither issue was directly addressed by almost all presidents.

3. Student body presidents did not necessarily expect their priorities to line up with their respective presidents due to the difference of their roles. It was noted that the constituency for an SGA is more narrowly focused than that of a president who must consider the entire campus community and be held accountable by boards of trustees and state legislatures.

Therefore, student government and institutional leadership agendas are minimally aligned regarding one or institutionally specific issues while overall, agendas tended to be more reflective of their respective constituencies.

Question 4: How did student body presidents describe their working relationship with their respective institutional leader and does that impact agenda alignment?

Among the 6 student body presidents interviewed, all except 1 SGA indicated that they felt supported by their president. The institution from the Midwest that categorized the relationship as negative stated the following:

> And so, at the beginning of this year, I just kind of talked with my executive cabinet and my Senate and was like, "Do we want to try and keep building this relationship, or do we just want not to care as much about it and do things that help students that we can do without them?" And that's kind of the path we took because every time we were trying to do something good for students, it seemed like they didn't want to help, didn't want to encourage, it or were straight up blocking it.

It was further noted at the aforementioned institution that regular meetings and communication between the SGA and the institutional president were rare and often described as superficial in nature. Instead, the student body president communicated only when necessary and typically

through intermediaries within the Division of Student Affairs. The notes taken during this interview aligned with this and it was noted as being important. On the contrary, the other 5 student body presidents felt that their relationship was positive. For example, the student body president at the other institution in the Midwest described his relationship with his president as being like a "colleague and a friend." One institution in the South described having a mutual respect and trust with his university president. These positive descriptions corresponded with the amount of communication between university presidents and student body presidents. With only one exception, student body presidents had an open line of communication with their campus leaders typically through mobile texting, phone calls, and email. subjects indicated that solicitation of advice was two-way. That is, both student body presidents and their university president sought out the other for unsolicited advice. For one institution in the South, regular monthly meetings—which was the norm across the 4 other universities—were cancelled due to the fact that the spoke informally on such a frequent basis.

Although there are many agenda priorities that do not align between SGAs and university presidents, 4 of the 6 interview subjects specifically stated that they felt as if they were able to influence their president's policy priorities. Document analysis demonstrated this alignment at a majority of the institutions studied. This was seen regarding off-campus housing for a university in the West, mental health issues for a Southern institution, and sexual assault for the other institution in the South. However, even when alignment was identified, the level of prioritization did not typically align based upon the prominence of coded references from documents and based upon notes taken during the interviews.

Themes

1. When interview subjects felt supported and had an open line of communication with their respective president, they tended to feel as if their SGA could influence the president's policy agenda.

2. While alignment was identified between SGAs and institutional presidents, the prominence of the aligned policy priorities differed. Issues such as sexual assault and mental health may have been shared priorities, but differences were seen in how protuberant said priorities were to student leaders compared to those held by institutional leaders.

Therefore, a strong and positive working relationship between student body presidents and university presidents does impact some aspects of agenda alignment but it was not shown to alter central priorities of either the SGA or of the respective institution's primary leader.

D. Summary

In this chapter, summary of the study and the purpose for conducting it were established. The methods by which the data were collected was also reviewed. Six interviews were conducted among the 8 total land-grant institutions that were studied. At each of the 8 institutions documents were analyzed to determine the agenda priorities of the respective Student Government Associations and university presidents. Thereafter, the 4 research questions were addressed with an overview of all data and themes established by the study.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Discussion

In this chapter, a summary of the study will be provided. This will include an overview of the study's importance, the data that were found and the answers to each research question. In addition, conclusions are established for each research question. Recommendations are provided for future research and practice. Limitations that were encountered in gather the data were also outlined. Finally, a discussion is provided that relates the study to the research framework.

A. Introduction

Student self-governance has existed for centuries on the campuses of institutions of higher education in the United States and are among the first documented examples of institutional pride by students (Kelley, 1974; May, 2010). They have further left their mark on US history by providing vital organizational structure for social movements post-World War II that directly shaped modern society (Favors, 2019). With the passage of decades, the size and scope of scholarship at land-grant institutions has expanded creating vast bureaucracies serving tens of thousands of students, faculty, and staff. The systems are described as chaotic and being largely governed by specific circumstances and chance (Birnbaum, 1988; Cohen et al., 1972). As such, a top-down approach to leadership will likely be ineffective for university presidents (Neumann, 1989). Therefore, it is of vital importance that shared governance be valued and cultivated with the study body.

The framework utilized in the study centers on agenda setting and policy implementation. More specifically, Cohen et al. (1972) established the "garbage can model" (GCM). This model was ideal for studying institutions of higher education because they find themselves establishing policy reactively, advocating for solutions while in search of problems, and the process by which those policies are managed is contingent on whom among the stakeholders is leading the charge

and how much effort they are able to lend to the issue compared with other stakeholders; these represent the 3 streams that flow into the perpetually disorganized "garbage can" (1972). Also, agenda setting requires collaborative governance by stakeholders to establish a policy agenda (Kingdon, 2011). Additionally, policy implementation theory embraced democratic models for policy making. deLeon and deLeon (2002) wrote that democratic models are essential for properly promoting scholarship and knowledge.

The study sought to better understand the policy agendas of SGAs and their universities' presidents. This was achieved first by reviewing and coding official meeting minutes from 8 SGAs at select land-grant institutions. Next, documents that established policy and agenda priorities for the presidents of the same institutions were reviewed and coded. Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 of the 8 student body presidents at said institutions. The following encompass the research questions and the answers obtained through the study:

1. Question 1: How did elected student government leaders at select land-grant universities describe their organizational priorities? Answer: Internal organizational management was the dominant theme found through the SGA document analysis. This includes general policy implementation and other duties needed for basic functionality. The semi-structured interviews further revealed that improvements to campus infrastructure encompassed another highly important agenda item. These included items related to housing improvements, environmental sustainability, and parking. Third, SGAs were very focused on policy issues related to wellness and safety for students including mental health support, sexual assault, and COVID-19 protocols.

2. Question 2: At the same institutions, what agendas and priorities were identified by institutional leadership documents? Answer: The most prominent agenda priorities were

related to research and innovation. This included discussions of grants from federal agencies, institutional rankings, and partnerships with private industry. The other prominent theme was related to campus infrastructure improvements. These improvements included technological upgrades, building renovations, and new additions for on-campus housing. It was noteworthy that agenda priorities related to campus sexual assault and diversity-related concerns were mentioned very infrequently if at all.

3. Question 3: To what extent were the student government and institutional leadership agendas and priorities aligned? Answer: The agendas were found to have minimal alignment overall. Student Government Associations and their institutions' presidents both prioritized infrastructure improvements, but the specific improvements typically diverged. Students tended to focus on more immediate improvements and university presidents demonstrated a longer view in that regard.

4. Question 4: How did student body presidents describe their working relationship with their respective institution leader and does that impact agenda alignment? Answer: There are some aspects of agenda alignment that was shown to have been impacted by strong professional relationships and a negative relationship negatively impacted alignment. However, SGAs and university presidents demonstrated that their policy priorities were more reflective of the specific constituencies rather than demonstrating alignment.

B. Conclusions

1. Student Government Associations at select land-grant institutions devote a notable amount of their agenda on implementing procedures related to day-to-day organizational management. In addition to this, a focus on short-term campus improvements which included most prominently making their campuses more environmentally sustainable. A

general desire for wellness and safety was further observed. These concerns typically included policies related to student mental health and crime reduction.

2. The presidents at the same land-grant institutions focused their agendas on campus progress related to research and innovation. Each institution was observed to have institutionally specific objectives and areas that were lauded. These presidents also featured campus improvements prominently. However, the campus improvements discussed were tied together within a context of fundraising and were more long-term projects compared to issues identified by SGAs. Sexual assault and general campus safety were not topics that were found to be highly prioritized by the institution's senior leader.

3. Student Government Associations and their respective university presidents have limited alignment as it pertains to their agendas. It was observed throughout the study that campus infrastructure improvements were a shared policy goal. However, the specifics of the improvements tended to differ. SGAs were not found to focus on enhanced research facilities and large structural improvements that take place over a longer period of time. SGAs further indicated that they did not necessarily expect much agenda alignment. The observed sentiment was that their respective aims as campus leaders were inherently different. Institutional leadership was observed by interview subjects to be confined by external stake holders such as state legislators and alumni.

4. For nearly every institution in the study, the student body presidents had a positive working relationship with the institution's president. The relationships were described as collegial and with considerable mutual trust. It was typical for the student leaders to feel

as if the priorities of the SGA would, at a minimum, be given attention by their university presidents.

C. Recommendations for Research

1. Future scholars would benefit from conducting semi-structured interviews with the university presidents from the institutions studied. The information provided with a semi-structured interview provides unique perspective that document analysis typically cannot convey.

2. The study could be expanded to include additional land-grant institutions. With dozens of such institutions in the United States, there is considerable opportunity to expand upon the research questions and utilize additional variables to establish superfluous observations related to, for example, comparison of urban and rural institutions.

3. Scholars may seek to take the select land-grant institutions studied and conduct a new analysis during a future academic year to analyze how, if at all, agenda priorities shifted between SGA's and institutional presidents.

4. Land-grant institutions provided a unique and specific view into institutions of higher education. However, some of the nation's most prestigious universities are predominantly privately-run institutions. That fact could provide an entirely new set of observations. Private institutions are not as constrained by public funding allocations. Furthermore, private universities do not share the same institutional mission as land-grant universities that seek to provide accessible education for as many residents as possible.

5. Given the impact of COVID-19 on institutions of higher education, it is recommended that a study of the same institutions be conducted to determine the impact of COVID-19 on agenda setting of SGAs and their respective university presidents.

D. Recommendations for Practice

1. Presidents at institutions of higher education will benefit in a number of ways by cultivating relationships with democratically elected student leaders. Among the students interviewed, those who described their relationship as most positive with their respective presidents also noted that they would go out of their way to provide a productive flow of information to ensure their president "didn't look poorly" to students. The relationships were found to be reciprocal and beneficial to both subjects when intentionally cultivated.

2. Most Student Government Associations elect a new slate of leaders for each academic year. Because of their limited amount of time in their roles, institutional presidents would benefit from directly participating in the transition process between leaders. Multiple interview subjects noted that they expended considerable energy to earn trust due to the actions of their predecessor. If less time is needed to establish those relationships, agenda priorities can be maximally beneficial to the campus community.

3. Student body presidents would benefit by seeking to cultivate relationships with other campus stakeholders. Interview subjects noted that some of their policy success was tied to relationships with alumni boards or faculty/staff senates. In an anarchical organization, agenda setting can be more successful when it is prioritized by more stakeholders.

4. Regularly scheduled meetings between a university president and student body president were common among the institutions studied. However, those who indicated having the strongest relationships noted that they were able to build that relationship outside of one-on-one meetings. Instead, when institutional presidents included SGA leaders in high-level meetings and social events, a stronger sense of mutual trust seemed to be

established. It would be recommended for university presidents to provide SGA leaders with as many of these opportunities as possible.

E. Limitations

Being able to conduct semi-structured interviews with each study body president from the 8 select land-grant institutions studied was not possible. While each subject responded to the recruitment correspondence, only 6 ultimately had the availability to participate. Furthermore, in order to establish a sample of convenience, the data collected only reviewed policy priorities through documents from the Fall 2021semester. This established a relatively short period in time by which the current student body presidents could be available to discuss priorities before new leaders were elected. Additionally, due to the nature of the spread of COVID-19 during the months studied, policy and agenda priorities may have varied. Finally, during the selection process for research subjects it was observed that many Student Government Associations fail to make their official documents publicly available. This established the need for a sample of convenience which limited the number of institutions studied.

F. Discussion

The vitality of the mission for post-secondary institutions of education is met with the challenge of existing within the confines of an entity that is defined as organized anarchy. As Cohen et al. (1972) wrote, there are 3 primary qualifiers for this designation. First, the institution is decentralized and lacking a logical structure. Second, many policy issues are resolved through trial and error. Third, the ability and willingness of stakeholders to consistently participate in the policy process varies considerably. As such, the policy process that is found within organized anarchy is outlined by the Garbage Can Model (1972). Reactive policy making, solutions in search of problems, and variability in participation among stakeholders are the 3 streams that

flow into the proverbial garbage can in this model. As the first step in the policy process, agenda setting is essential (Kingdon, 2011) and when participatory agenda setting is realized, it produces policy priorities that are less-politicized and stakeholders are able to work more cohesively together (Hinrichs & Johnston, 2020). The study supports this notion. Nearly all of the SGAs studied described their agenda setting process as being valued by their respective presidents. Students felt they had influence in their president's policy agenda even if those policies weren't reflected in outward-facing documents. The shared governance was viewed as a positive relationship in which student leaders were frequently regarded as colleagues by university presidents.

The relationship between the stakeholders analyzed for this study were shown to combine top-down and bottom-up policy frameworks and strongly emphasizes the importance of utilizing democracy in establishing collaborative policy implementation (deLeon & deLeon, 2002; Sørensen & Torfing, 2011). As such, the study demonstrated the benefits of collaborative policy implementation. First, when these relationships were positively exhibited, institutional leaders and SGAs relied on the unique experiences and perspectives each brought to the table. Student body presidents noted using university presidents as a means to seek advice on possible policy priorities and concerns and university presidents utilized SGAs to provide insight into the student experience. Campus infrastructure was a major area of agenda alignment, and this demonstrated a sense of mutual ownership of the campus between university presidents and SGAs. Finally, these relationships ultimately cultivate more innovative ideas. For the one SGA that described a very negative relationship with their university's president, the opposite was observed. In this situation, students knowingly set their agendas understanding it was likely to instill conflict or face resistance with their campus' leadership. Simultaneously, the institution's president was

unable to hear directly from student leaders and was subject to accusations of being out-of-touch and unconcerned with student needs. Furthermore, it was concluded that agenda alignment was limited. Nevertheless, all other interview subjects spoke enthusiastically about their respective president's policy priorities even if they lacked alignment with their own. Interview subjects further acknowledged that their respective agendas were inherently contrasting but described this as being positive for the institution as a whole. While this was surprising, it emphasizes the need for cooperation and the democratic process for agenda setting and collaborative policy implementation to be successfully realized. The one noticeable exception to this observation was regarding to issues related to campus safety and wellness. Students were found to be very attentive to crime on campus, sexual assault, and mental health. With little exceptions, however, university presidents failed to directly address these issues. The reason for this may be the intended audiences for the documents that were reviewed. SGAs are incentivized to ensure their constituents'' concerns are being addressed due to the democratic nature of their organizations. The documents used to establish policy priorities for the institutions' presidents were directed at audiences that value institutional reputation. It is possible that despite the salience of these policy priorities on the select campuses, it did not serve those leaders to highlight them publicly.

Institutions of higher education occupy in a unique space in society. Land-grant institutions more specifically have and continue to play a vital role in providing post-secondary education to those who seek it and are hubs for life-altering research and innovation. For most undergraduate students, however, attending university functions to provide more than in-classroom education. Developing skills and cognitive abilities require experiential learning. Developmental psychology has established that rational moral functioning represents the final stages of development and this occurs during traditionally undergraduate years (Boyle, 2013).

Davis (2013) punctuated this notion when she charged student affairs administrators to a create campus "where critical dialogue, self-reflection, and personal responsibility take place. Action must be taken to build a culture of civility and caring" (p. 50). Interview subjects represented merely one individual within SGAs. However, they all spoke enthusiastically and with passion about their experiences in the role. Their relationships with university presidents were described as being invaluable to their experience as undergraduate students. While these relationships did not yield a focus on external political challenges as they did in the 1960s, respect for students and their place in society made their institutions and surrounding communities stronger.

The role that students play as key stakeholders on their campuses is of utmost importance for shared governance to be realized. While their scope and experience can lead to institutional leaders lazily rejecting their contributions, it has been demonstrated that their contribution should be valued and cultivated. As the Association of University Professors wrote (1966): "If institutional support is to have its fullest possible meaning, it should incorporate the strength, freshness of view, and idealism of the student body" (p. 8). A failure to recognize this notion is done at the peril of an institution and, ultimately, the entire community.

G. Summary

In this chapter a summary of the study was presented as the introduction. This summary included the importance of the study, data collection methods, and research questions and answers. Conclusions were then established for each research question. Thereafter, recommendations were provided for both practitioners and for future research. Limitations encountered for the study were noted. The final section provides the discussion of the study as it relates to the theoretical framework.

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Appendix

Appendix A

IRB Approval

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

To:	JD DiLoreto-Hill
From:	Douglas J AdamsJustin R Chimka, Chair IRB Expedited Review
Date:	01/11/2022
Action:	**Exemption Granted**
Action Date:	01/11/2022
Protocol #:	2112375366
Study Title:	ON THE SAME PAGE: STUDENT GOVERNMENT AND THE UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA ALIGNMENT

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: Michael T Miller, Investigator

Appendix B

Census Regions and Divisions of the United States (Source: United States Census Bureau)
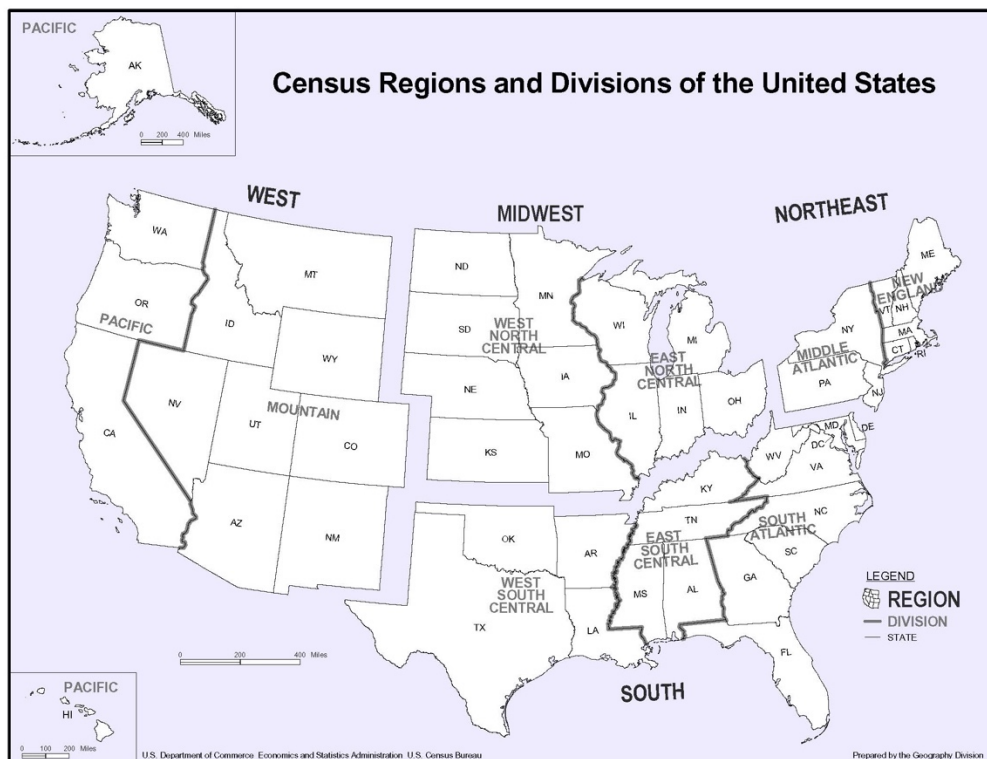
Appendix C

Interview Protocol

**On the Same Page: Student Government and Administrative Agenda Alignment
University of Arkansas**

Time of interview: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Institution: _____

Academic major: _____

Hometown: _____

Year/semester in school: _____

**THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY ABOUT
AGENDA ALIGNMENT BETWEEN STUDENT GOVERNMENT AND
ADMINISTRATORS. THIS STUDY WILL LOOK AT WHAT YOUR STUDENT
GOVERNMENT PRIORITIZES AND HOW THAT COMPARES/CONSTRASTS WITH
YOUR UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT'S AGENDA PRIORITIES.**

**I AM PROVIDING YOU WITH AN INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR YOU TO
REVIEW AND SIGN, IF YOU AGREE.**

**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 JD DiLoreto-Hill
(diloreto@uark.edu) or his Dissertation Director, Dr. Michael Miller (mtmille@uark.edu),
University of Arkansas, (978) 761-6618 or (479) 575-3582.**

1. Describe for me the general structure of the student government association at your institution? What are your constitutional duties as president? What other duties do you undertake outside of those outlined in governing documents?

Other elements to consider:

- how many branches

- fee money allocation

- student programming

- how large is the organization/each branch

- are you the primary spokesperson for the organization (internal and external media)

- meeting with administrators?

- Committee assignments?

- Social media management?

- Relationship with Board of Trustees?

2. In your view, what are the primary two to four issues facing your institution right now?

Other elements to consider:

- How did you come to determine those issues as priorities? (i.e., student polling, anecdotally, personal experiences)

- What has your SGA accomplished so far this year to address those issues?

- Is your SGA engaged in external issues (i.e., black lives matter, state/federal COVID-19 policies)? Why/why not?

3. Tell me about the relationship that you have with your chancellor/president.

Other elements to consider

- How often do you meet with him/her? How often do you communicate (formally or informally)?

- What is your primary form of communication? (i.e., face-to-face, e-mail, text, phone/video calls)

- Describe how your president/chancellor approaches disagreements that arise between your organization's priorities and theirs?

- What's the biggest challenges/obstacles in your relationship?

- Do you feel supported by your chancellor/president? Why/why not?

4. What do you believe are your chancellor/president's top priorities for your institution?

Other elements to consider

- How well do those priorities align with your organization's?

- Do you feel your SGA influenced those priorities?

- Are your external political/societal priorities shared by president?

5. Is there anything else you want to add that we haven't covered?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY!