Title
Institutional Diversity in the U.S.: A Study of How a Historically Black College, Women's College, and Evangelical Christian College Contribute to the Social, Political, and Economic Fabric of a Diverse Democracy

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Institutional Diversity in the U.S.: A Study of How a Historically Black College, Women’s College, and Evangelical Christian College Contribute to the Social, Political, and Economic Fabric of a Diverse Democracy

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Melissa Lansang Millora

2013
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Institutional Diversity in the U.S.: A Study of How a Historically Black College, Women’s College, and Evangelical Christian College Contribute to the Social, Political, and Economic Fabric of a Diverse Democracy

by

Melissa Lansang Millora

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Robert A. Rhoads, Chair

This study was primarily a multiple-case study that incorporated descriptive statistical analysis to examine the contributions that three niche institutions play in the diverse democracy of the U.S. A niche institution is a college or university whose role in U.S. higher education is to meet the needs of a specific group and whose resources are influenced by perceptions of the institution’s relevance by specific populations and interest groups, state and federal governments, and others who are in a position to influence the allocation of resources. Findings for each case study are discussed in detail by institution, and then a comparison of findings across the three institutions were categorized by four themes: 1) niche institutions’ role in the higher education marketplace, 2) niche institutions as social selves, 3) community engagement and outreach, and 4) niche institutions’ potential for promoting substantive citizenship in a diverse democracy. Implications for institutional leaders, policymakers, and scholars are also discussed.
The dissertation of Melissa Lansang Millora is approved.

Mitchell J. Chang
Raymond Rocco
Richard L. Wagoner
Robert A. Rhoads, Chair

University of California, Los Angeles
2013
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Earning a Ph.D. from UCLA has been one of my greatest personal successes, but I cannot and will not take sole responsibility for successfully completing the journey. On the path, I encountered a variety of unexpected challenges, the greatest of which was the loss of my mom. The people who provided me with different forms of support—emotional, intellectual, financial, spiritual—are so numerous that I cannot possibly name them all here and if I tried, I would undoubtedly leave someone out. However, there are some people who have gone above and beyond in their efforts to help me maintain enough confidence, peace, and determination to complete this adventure.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

U.S. colleges and universities have served the public good through the many ways they benefit individuals and society (Bowen, 1977). Stadtman (1980) argues that the variation of institutional forms in the U.S. system allows colleges and universities to craft unique missions that align with available resources and the needs of the populations they serve. He also claims that the variation itself helps the system as a whole to respond to the “pressures of a society that is itself characterized by great complexity and diversity” (p. 98). In this study, I use the term “institutional diversity” to refer to the variation across institutions in degree offerings, programs of study, control (public versus private), governance, and mission. Institutional diversity “ensures a system of higher education that is at once stable and responsive to the demands of its social environments” (Birnbaum, 1983a, p. x). Institutional diversity is reflected by the co-existence of large public research universities, private nonsectarian institutions, religiously affiliated universities, community colleges, and for-profit institutions.

In his seminal work on institutional diversity, Birnbaum (1983a) argued that the existence of so many kinds of colleges and universities is a result of the many niches created by U.S. society. Drawing on concepts from biology and organizational studies, he argued that niches are abstract spaces that arise from the needs of students, employers, and society, and manifest in the roles that institutions play in the system. For instance, the previously unmet intellectual and professional needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing created a niche that Gallaudet University helped fill in 1864 (Gallaudet University, n.d.). Niches also emerge from conditions in the environment that provide or constrain resources. In the late nineteenth century, the U.S. government needed assistance developing land at the same time that students were beginning to call for more practical education. Through the Morrill Land Grant Act, the government offered
tracts of land to new and pre-existing institutions in exchange for their commitment to offer utilitarian and vocational programs of study. One could argue that these environmental factors created a niche that the land-grant institutions filled. Throughout this manuscript, I use the term “niche institution” to refer to an institution whose role in the system is to meet the needs of a specific group and whose resources are influenced by perceptions of the institution’s relevance by specific populations and interest groups, state and federal governments, and others who are in a position to influence the allocation of resources.

Niche institutions emerge in response to a confluence of factors including the needs articulated by various actors and interest groups at specific points in history, the resources that are available, and the relative success of competing groups in obtaining resources to advance their needs. As a result, institutions that once filled a niche may become irrelevant if there is no longer a perceived need for them or if limited resources make them financially unstable. For instance, in the late nineteenth century, the purposeful exclusion of Blacks, women, and religious minorities from higher education led to the creation of institutions that served those populations exclusively (Allen, 1992; Anderson, 1988; Harwarth, Maline, & DeBra, 1997; Shannon, 1982; Solomon, 1985; Thelin, 2004). Not only did the exclusion of women, along with racial and religious minorities, create an opening in the system for institutions to educate excluded students, but the students themselves became “resources.”

**Problem Statement**

Although HBCUs and women’s colleges filled a niche that emerged in the late nineteenth century, today they have been criticized for excluding non-Black and male students, respectively (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Gasman & Tudico, 2008; Langdon, 2001; Shannon, 1982). As of today, there are 105 HBCUs (Department of the Interior, n.d), down from 117 institutions a quarter of a century ago (see Appendix A for a list of HBCUs). There has been a similar
decline in the number of women’s colleges, which number 51, down from nearly 300 in the 
1960s (Department of Education, n.d) (see Appendix B for a list of women’s colleges).

As higher education moved away from preparing religious leaders and the religious 
nature of the institution became less important, many of the early Protestant colleges became 
nonsectarian, or at least more secular. The result was a new niche for religiously affiliated 
colleges, which seems to be stable for Catholic institutions and flourishing for evangelical 
Christians. Today, there are approximately 200 Catholic institutions (Association of Catholic 
Colleges and Universities, n.d.) and 118 evangelical Christian institutions affiliated with the 
Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) (Council for Christian Colleges and 
Universities, n.d) (see Appendix C for a list of CCCU member institutions). Growth in the 
number of institutions and in institutional enrollments is likely due to students and faculty 
wanting to avoid “spiritually empty” classrooms and what they perceive as “intellectual” and 
“moral relativism” (Riley, 2005, p. 5).

Purpose of the Study

As analogs of the nation’s diverse population, the ways in which HBCUs, women’s 
colleges, and evangelical Christian institutions engage in public life reflect the diverse needs of 
the nation. More importantly, they perform vital roles for the public good that are directly related 
to the populations and interests for which they were initially established (Allen & Jewell, 2002; 
Anderson, 1988; Birnbaum, 1983b; Solomon, 1985; Wolfe, 2006). This study sought to 
understand the role that three types of niche institutions play in the system by examining how an 
institution’s identity differentiates it from other colleges and how identity reflects an institution’s 
niche role. This study further sought to understand how institutional actors interpret and enact 
the identity at three distinct niche institutions. Finally, this study sought to investigate how three 
niche institutions define and enact a form of public good through engagement with their
respective communities.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do students’ and faculty’s views on contemporary issues and community engagement vary across historically Black colleges and universities, women’s colleges, and evangelical Christian colleges?
   a) To what degree do students’ or faculty’s views on contemporary issues reflect their respective institutional identities?
   b) To what degree do students’ or faculty’s views on community engagement reflect their respective institutional identities?

2. How do institutional actors interpret the identities of their niche institution?
   a) To what extent do institutional actors embrace those identities?
   b) What lines of action do these individuals develop that are consistent with their interpretations of the institution’s identity?

3. How do institutions conceptualize their communities?
   a) How do niche institutions seek to advance those communities?
   b) How do institutional actors’ views of community engagement interact with their institutional identities?

4. How do niche institutions benefit individuals and society through community engagement?

Significance

This study is significant for several reasons. First, nearly every U.S. institution receives federal and state financial support, and there is an expectation that colleges and universities that accept these monies make contributions to the public good. In addition, because Supreme Court
cases, presidential executive orders, and acts of Congress have outlawed racial segregation, along with discrimination based on gender or religion, one could argue that the niches created by the exclusionary behaviors of some early colleges are no longer needed because the law protects individuals from discrimination based on race, gender, and religion. This study helps higher education scholars, administrators, and policymakers understand how three niche institutions continue to fulfill their initial purpose of broadening access to higher education and how they continue to make specific contributions to the public good that would not otherwise be made by other colleges and universities, thereby warranting continued public support. Furthermore, as national movements related to standards and accreditation exert more force over institutional behaviors, this study answers questions about whether those attempts take into account the benefits of having diverse institutional types. More broadly, the findings of this study show that public policy does not adequately account for unique contributions that niche institutions make to American society. Finally, this study yields implications for the way we understand democracy. Democracy requires that individuals have full participation in the social, economic, and political fabric of the nation. Niche institutions assist individuals by contributing to individual learning and growth; to social mobility; and to the representation of viewpoints and interests of various groups in society. In addition, the individuals and communities that benefit from niche institutions’ engagement are not limited to the historical niche constituency.

In this study, I addressed the first research question using concepts from organizational culture. Certain aspects of culture give rise to institutional identity and vice versa; identity then influences the behavior of institutional members and their interactions with non-members (Scott & Davis, 2007). I combined concepts from organizational culture and symbolic interactionism to address the second research question. Symbolic interactionism suggests that individuals interpret their environments and then develop lines of action based on those interpretations. To address
the third research question, I utilized concepts from political science, such as representation and recognition, to examine how institutions conceptualize community and how institutional actors and institutions advance the special interests of their communities.

This study had two phases. In the quantitative phase of the study, I performed descriptive analyses of national data to compare the opinions held by members of niche institutions with those at all other niche groups. For each group of niche institutions, I aggregated student and faculty data on items that reflected characteristics about socio-political views and dispositions toward community engagement and then compared the means for each niche group to the mean for all other baccalaureate institutions.

In the qualitative phase, I conducted multiple-case studies to answer the remaining research questions. To explore how institutional actors perceive institutional identity and how they enact those identities in society, I conducted interviews with students, faculty, and administrators. I relied on those interviews to understand how institutional identity shapes an institution’s conceptualization of community. I reviewed mission statements, marketing materials, and websites to further my understanding of how each institution publicly articulated its responsibility to those communities. Finally, to understand how niche institutions seek to advance their communities and whether that simultaneously advances the public good, I identified the institutions’ formal programs and community partnerships. A majority of the interviews were with individuals involved in running and participating in those programs. In gathering all of these data, I developed an understanding of how niche institutions have uniquely benefited individuals, communities, and society in ways that are related to their institutional identities.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Institutional Diversity

Institutional diversity results, in part, from the efforts of colleges and universities to adapt to the needs of a changing environment (Stadtman, 1980). There are approximately 4,400 degree-granting institutions across the public, private nonprofit, and for-profit higher education sectors in the United States (Aud, Hussar, Planty, Snyder, Bianco, Fox, et al., 2010). Institutions in the U.S. boast a variety of characteristics that include public versus private and nonprofit versus for-profit, and they offer a variety of programs ranging from less-than-two-year certificate programs to two-year and four-year degree programs to master’s and doctoral programs.

Institutional diversity distinguishes the U.S. higher education enterprise from other systems around the world. Higher education institutions in the U.S. are beholden to federal and state laws, but these institutions do not constitute a system. They enjoy a great deal of autonomy and conform to standards such as those set by accrediting agencies, particularly when doing so yields benefits for the institutions.

Peter Eckel and Jacqueline King (2004) argue that several principles influence institutional diversity in the U.S. The commitment to free expression and to limited government has allowed for a wide spectrum of private founders to build institutions designed to address the needs of a specific group. Additionally, a market mentality has infused the higher education enterprise and legitimized competition rather than cooperation for students, faculty, and resources. Lastly, many of the nation’s ideals, such as opportunity and social mobility through education and work, have reinforced the notion that all who wish to enroll in colleges and universities can find a place to do so, providing support for the diversity and size of the higher education landscape.
Institutional diversity creates a number of benefits for the U.S. It allows stakeholders to exert influence on colleges and universities in order to ensure that these institutions meet the needs of society (Stadtman, 1980). Institutional diversity creates the conditions for cost-effectiveness in meeting the needs of a diverse society (Morphew, 2009). Limited public resources may motivate state leaders and state higher education boards to eliminate duplication and promote mission differentiation, and therefore meet the broadest range of needs by supporting the greatest number of institutional types. Additionally, variations in the composition of institutions’ governing boards and variations among the fifty states in their higher education governance and policy structures, along with a limited but distinct federal role over higher education governance, reduce the likelihood that any singular authority could effectively use the higher education enterprise to indoctrinate students (Stadtman, 1980). In other words, diverse institutions serve as a safeguard against indoctrination by expanding and preserving a variety of ideas, beliefs, and viewpoints. The aforementioned benefits are possible outcomes of institutional diversity, but they are representative of an ideal situation in which all stakeholders have access to all information and make decisions rationally. The benefits described above also presuppose a perfect process in which the needs of all communities and people are known and balanced equally, despite potential politicking from interest groups and lobbies. The influence of politics on statewide decision-making processes is discussed later in this chapter.

One final benefit of institutional diversity manifests in the variety of options available to students (Stadtman, 1980). Students can seek admission to institutions that have desired curricular offerings along with endless combinations of co-curricular and non-curricular educational programs, depending on their interest. Online and hybrid delivery models permit students with significant time constraints to access postsecondary education. Thus, even with the rising costs of a college education and a decreasing ability to pay among prospective college
students, the sheer size of the higher education system and its attendant diversity nonetheless allow for almost universal access (Birnbaum, 1983b; Hurtado, 2003).

This perspective on access is grounded in understanding the history of the American college and university. Until the mid-nineteenth century, higher education was primarily open only to wealthy White Protestant male students, considered at that time the “elites” of American society. Correspondingly, elite institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton admitted marginal numbers of Jewish males and completely excluded Catholic students (Karabel, 2006). Separate colleges were eventually established to educate women, Catholic students, and African-American students who came from wealthier socioeconomic statuses (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Solomon, 1985; Thelin, 2004). The Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, in creating the land-grant institutions, eventually increased access to students from all parts of society, particularly the lower classes (Cohen, 1998; Hurtado, 2003). Although U.S. higher education has struggled to provide equal access to higher education for non-Protestant, non-White, and poor students (Karabel, 1984, 2006), over time, religious groups, communities, and individuals have created new institutions to meet their needs, contributing to a higher education enterprise in which all groups can presumably find a place (Eckel & King, 2004).

Several factors threaten the stability of each of these niche groups. By conservative accounts, and sometimes evidenced by court decisions and legislation (Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002), society has made sufficient progress toward racial and gender equality, eradicating the need for affirmative action policies (for a discussion of “regression in access and equity” policies, see Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009, p. 397). This narrative also suggests that HBCUs and women’s colleges are outdated (Salomone, 2007) and that they serve to perpetuate forms of racial and gender segregation (Kohl, 1994). For Christian colleges, the public’s deep-seated belief in separation of church and state leads some policymakers to question public support of
these institutions (Grant, 2009). Finally, for all three groups, shifting public policy interests puts their existence at risk by prioritizing efficiency and outputs from a market perspective, a position which favors large, diversified, research institutions (Eckel, 2008). The unfavorable political and financial climate for niche institutions is in direct opposition to a different public policy goal, which is to fund higher education for its many contributions to society.

**Higher Education’s Social Contract**

Although the colonial colleges in the U.S. originally performed the function of educating an elite group of individuals, over time, increasing forms of public support for higher education have created an expectation that colleges and universities contribute to the public good. The expectation that colleges and universities contribute to the public good, sometimes referred to as higher education’s “social contract” or “compact,” derives in part from federal and state governments’ funding of higher education (Altbach, 1999; McDowell, 2001). Although state governments generally provide a greater proportion of funding to public colleges and universities (Eckel, 2008), the federal government has played an equally influential role in establishing a social contract with higher education. This section focuses on key points in U.S. history that have contributed to the development of higher education’s social contract, including: 1) passage of the Morrill Acts, 2) codifying the tax-exempt status of private institutions, 3) development of a federal science policy, and 4) the Higher Education Act and its amendments.

By granting states land on which to establish institutions of higher learning with utilitarian academic programs that were broadly accessible, the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862 established a link between the public universities and the public’s welfare (Thelin, 2004). For both public and private institutions, the legislation “introduced the notion of service and outreach to American higher education and created a reciprocal relationship between the land-grant university and the citizens of the state” (Vincent, 2003, p. 3). George McDowell (2001) explains,
“both by their virtue of their scholarly aims and whom they would serve, the land-grant universities were established as people’s universities. This was their social contract” (p. 3). On one level, the Morrill Act of 1862 promoted greater access to higher education by expanding the number of higher education institutions themselves, and the second Morrill Act of 1890 broadened the types of programs supported by the federal government; however, the latter ushered in “separate but unequal” colleges for African Americans (Brown & Davis, 2001, p. 36).

In 1894, shortly after passage of the second Morrill Act, Congress passed the first federal tax law and exempted private colleges and universities from taxation due to their educational nature (Colombo, 1993). Admittedly, because of their engagement in charitable works, private colleges dating back to the colonial era had always been exempt from paying local taxes, a practice that many states have continued through the years (Colombo, 1993). Years later, when Congress codified its growing body of tax laws, it created the 501(c)(3) category for institutions that pursued charitable, educational, or scientific purposes (Blumberg, 1996). Scholars have estimated the value of this benefit to the higher education industry at billions of dollars per year (Gaul & Borowski, 1993; Wolanin, 2003).

The rationale for exempting private educational and scientific institutions from tax liabilities was twofold (Blumberg, 1996). Private not-for-profit institutions not only “[conferred] a public benefit on society,” but the benefit was one that a community may not have had the capacity or desire to provide (Blumberg, 1996, p. 102). Additionally, Congress hoped to encourage “the development of private institutions that serve a useful public purpose” and to “[advance] the work of public institutions already supported by tax revenues” (Blumberg, 1996, p 103). Categorization of many private institutions as “not-for-profit” and the resulting exemption from local, state, and federal taxes added to the expectation that private nonprofit institutions contribute to the public good. This public policy goal is evident in the requirement
that tax-exempt organizations refrain from conducting activities that lead to “private inurement” and comply with “limits on political lobbying and campaign activity” (Colombo, 1993, p. 846). Furthermore, tax-exempt organizations needed to demonstrate consistency between the organization’s purpose and current public policy or risk loss of the tax exemption, potentially costing an institution thousands of dollars in lost revenue. For example, in 1985 Bob Jones University famously lost its tax-exempt status because of its racially discriminatory practices (Colombo,).

Nearly three-quarters of a century passed before the federal government, through its federal science policy, strengthened its expectation that the U.S. higher education system contribute to the public good. During both world wars, the federal government parlayed the expertise of academics into various national security initiatives. Federal agencies enlisted the help of professors in history, political science, modern languages, and a variety of fields with their overseas military operations (Thelin, 2004). Some of the most infamous contributions that academics made to the war effort emerged from the research and development of the atom and hydrogen bombs (Thelin). The partnership between the federal government and academics convinced American society that “the link between research universities and [the] nation’s economic strength and national security was too vital for the national government to leave unattended” (Graham & Diamond, 1997, p. 25). Furthermore, some government-funded research had led to an improved standard of living for many U.S. citizens (Machan, 2002), and the result was an expectation that colleges and universities contribute to the public good via their knowledge production capabilities (Geiger, 1990).

Immediately after World War II ended, two events demonstrated unequivocally the federal government’s interest in the contributions that the colleges and universities could make to the nation’s public good. First, Vannevar Bush’s 1946 report titled *Science: The Endless*
*Frontier* outlined the role that science could play in the nation’s future (Geiger, 1990). In the same year, President Truman appointed a commission to examine the various ways in which higher education could serve national interests, marking the first time a U.S. president formally engaged in educational matters (Cohen, 1998; Thelin, 2004). It was the Truman Commission that first explored ways in which the federal government could provide the necessary financial support for more students to pursue a college education; the National Defense Education Act became the commission’s first successful foray into providing direct financial aid to students who showed potential for contributing to research and development relevant to national security interests (Thelin).

A major consequence of the federal government’s partnership with the higher education community during wartime was that colleges and universities came to depend on the federal government for funds (Thelin, 2004). Support came in the form of research and development funds and student financial aid (Geiger, 1990). Nearly all colleges and universities in the United States, including for-profit institutions, are publicly subsidized and, for this reason, all institutions that benefit from federal funding are beholden to an expectation to contribute to the public good.

Another legislative act that helped cement higher education’s social contract was the Higher Education Act of 1964. Its origins were in federal post-war science policy, and its immediate goals were to provide financial aid to the most financially needy students (Gladieux & King, 1999) who had the necessary academic preparation to succeed in college (Schrader, 1969), but who could not attend college without assistance. The perspective that a college education can benefit both students and society (as established by the Truman Commission) merged with popular demand for equity and equal civil rights in the 1960s (as seen throughout the Civil Rights Movement) to provide a climate favorable to the passage of the Higher Education Act,
which codified the federal government’s expectation that colleges and universities contribute to the public good via their transformation of students.

The Higher Education Act introduced a new mechanism by which the federal government could influence the work of colleges and universities. To be eligible for federal funds, institutions had to comply with various guidelines. By accepting federal funds, institutions became subject to additional federal regulation through executive orders, court decisions, and legislation. They also had to be licensed to operate within a state (McGuinness, 1999) and accredited by a government-approved accreditation agency (Gladieux & King, 1999). Accreditation agencies had the power to alter the behavior of institutions; failure to meet standards could jeopardize institutional and student support (Cohen, 1998). Furthermore, institutions were required to comply with social legislation such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination based on race in federally funded programs (Kutler, 1984), and Title IX of the 1972 amendments, which prohibited gender discrimination and promoted a policy goal of attaining proportionate representation of women in federally funded programs (Cohen, 1998).

If the federal government has played the role of “impartial … overseer of public interest” in relation to the nation’s system of higher education, the state government has played the dual roles of overseer of public interest and “provider of higher education services” (McGuinness, 2005, p. 200). With the passage of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972, the federal government further extended its influence over the activities of colleges and universities. The 1972 amendments offered financial incentives to states for creating agencies that could coordinate the activities of all colleges and universities within a state and serve as a liaison to the federal government (Thelin, 2004). One of the key responsibilities of these state agencies, known as “1202 Commissions,” was to engage in long-range planning and to prevent duplication of
academic programs across institutions (Thelin, 2004). As a result, many institutional leaders gave more consideration to their institutions’ missions and to statewide concerns than they might otherwise have (Thelin, 2004).

Due to the significant financial contributions they make to state colleges and universities, state governments developed expectations for these institutions to contribute to the improvement of a state’s social and economic future. As the accountability movement emerged in the 1980s, states introduced performance funding, which linked an institution’s funding “directly and tightly to the performance of public campuses on individual indicators,” especially student learning outcomes (McGuinness, 2005, p. 204). Expectations of accountability extended beyond the public institutions to private nonprofit institutions even though state governments offer little funding to them. For instance, when the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education “grades” each state’s system of higher education in terms of preparation, participation, affordability, completion, benefits, and learning, the center includes both public and private not-for-profit institutions in its evaluation (p. 206). The initiative, called Measuring Up, then compares each state’s performance to the best-performing states.

The variation in structure, affordability, and other aspects of higher education that can be observed across states draws attention to the fact that “the fifty states differ significantly in history, culture, and political and economic dynamics” and may exhibit different orientations toward the idea of higher education as a public or private good (McGuinness, 2005, p. 205). Across states, financial support for colleges and universities has ebbed and flowed depending on the state of the economy, but state leaders have maintained many common perspectives. First, state leaders have become increasingly concerned with “capacity building” and “capacity utilization”; and second, they have begun to emphasize a “broader public agenda … [that addresses] a state’s major social, economic, and educational challenges and sets forth strategies
to link higher education to the achievement of these goals” (McGuinness, 2005, pp. 217-218). In contrast, institutional leaders remain concerned with “institutional mission and the capacity to accomplish that mission” (McGuinness, 2005, pp. 217-218).

**The Public Good**

Changing historical contexts have influenced how scholars conceptualize colleges’ and universities’ contributions to the public good. State and federal legislation and policy development have played important roles in shaping conceptions of how the U.S. higher education enterprise contributes to the public good.

Since both state and federal governments contribute large amounts of funding to all U.S. colleges and universities through research grants and student financial aid, policymakers set the expectation that colleges and universities perform some form of public service (McDowell, 2001). Robert Peterson (1975) contends that the services higher education institutions provide to the public justify public funding for higher education. Peterson goes so far as to assert that there is a social contract in this regard and fulfilling that contract remains a goal for higher education. Colleges and universities seem to have embraced this obligation, at least on the surface (Scott, 2006). Some of the most popular perspectives on the public services that colleges and universities provide are described below.

**Individual Benefits**

A college education has long been viewed as a means for individuals to attain upward socioeconomic mobility (Bowen, 1982; Brint & Karabel, 1989; Perkin, 2007). Completion of each additional level of education beyond high school yields increases in income (Cohen & Brawer, 1982). Data from the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that the median salary for male college graduates between the ages of 25 and 34 was $20,000 more than their high school counterparts in 2008; and for female college graduates, the median was $17,000
more (2008). Tony Chambers (2005) also suggests that other benefits to the individual include “improved health, improved quality of life for offspring, and better consumer decision-making” (p. 10).

**Societal Benefits**

Higher education is believed to increase the economic benefits to the public through “increased tax revenues, greater productivity, and decreased reliance on financial support” (Chambers, 2005, p. 10). Social outcomes of obtaining a college education that benefit the public include “changes in people and changes in ideas … [that] inevitably influence the character of social organizations, social institutions, broad social values and attitudes” (Bowen, 1977, p. 49). Social outcomes for the public also include “reduced crime rates, increased charitable giving/community service, increased quality of civic life, and social cohesion/appreciation of diversity” (Chambers, 2005, p. 10). In these ways, colleges and universities can effect social change indirectly, via college graduates’ engagement in society. At the same time, colleges can also be “agents of social stability” by transmitting knowledge and culture (Bowen, 1977, p. 49).

**Benefits to Democracy**

Another way in which colleges and universities contribute to the public good is through encouragement of democratic processes. Colleges and universities raise consciousness of social issues and promote citizenship by helping students gain awareness of social problems, increase their understanding of the world, develop the inclination to participate in public affairs, and develop the skills to think critically about matters (Bowen, 1977). Bowen explains:

… a widely acknowledged goal of higher education is to equip students to view their own society with some detachment … to gain perspective on its social problems and shortcomings, and to acquire the will as well as the political and technical skills needed to work for social change … It is frequently argued that the college or university itself, as a
community of learners and researchers, should serve society in the capacity of social critic—as a center from which ideas basic to social change would radiate (p. 49).

Fulfilling the Social Contract through Civic or Community Engagement

Colleges and universities that honor their social contract are civically engaged. Engagement refers to an institution’s teaching, research, and service that are connected to the community (Kellogg Commission, 1998). An engaged institution that “takes its scholarly leadership seriously is one that is committed to higher education as an institution within the public sphere and whose mission is to embrace difficult questions about our values and responsibilities, about our past, present, and future, about our differences and alternative worldviews, and about enhancing democracy and inclusion”; furthermore, it takes into account the diversity of communities or “publics” that exist (Weis, Nozaki, Granfield, & Olsen, 2007, pp. 426-428). Three principles for being an engaged institution are: 1) being responsive to current student needs, 2) providing students with practical opportunities to prepare for future participation in society, and 3) focusing its expertise, knowledge production functions, and resources on the problems facing its community (Kellogg Commission, 1998).

It is a longstanding debate whether colleges and universities should serve the public good directly by contributing to broad social goals through knowledge production and critiquing society or indirectly by enhancing the individuals’ knowledge, skills, and abilities to participate in the democratic process (Bowen, 1977). A compromise between this false “either/or” binary points to “fulfillment of [both] individual and societal needs” as related to the democratic obligation of colleges and universities (Henderson, 1970, p. 4). Still, this debate raises concerns about what the public gains by supporting both public and private not-for-profit institutions.

Challenges to Supporting the Public Good Mission of Colleges and Universities

State fiscal policy for public higher education has been unfavorable toward higher
education in recent years as policymakers allocate scarce resources to health care, welfare, and K-12 education (see e.g., McLendon, Hearn, & Mokher, 2009; Tandberg, 2010). The ways in which policymakers determine how to support higher education depend on a variety of factors, including a state’s demographics, unemployment levels, and variables specific to the colleges and universities within a state. For instance, in some states the pattern of increasing institutional tuition was found to relate to decreases in state expenditures for higher education (Tandberg, 2010). Tandberg offers two explanations for this finding. It may be that state policymakers that are anti-privatization of higher education are signaling their discontent with those institutions by cutting funding. Alternatively, increased tuitions may be institutions’ responses to state funding cuts, which is an equally plausible explanation given that of all the recipients of state funding, colleges and universities are well positioned to make up revenue shortfalls by charging greater tuition. The latter action ultimately places a greater burden on the student and may serve to narrow access to higher education for lower-income populations.

In David Tandberg’s (2010) study of state fiscal policy related to higher education, he examined the effects of a variety of political variables, including interest group activity, citizen ideology, income inequality (as measured by the Gini coefficient), and some higher education variables such as the presence of a consolidated governing board, on the proportion of state funds directed to higher education institutions. Tandberg expected that a moralistic state political culture, associated with expectations of a government role in advancing the public interest and public well-being, would be associated with greater state expenditures for higher education. Instead, he found greater state support of higher education to be associated with a traditionalistic political culture, described as a culture that preserves the status quo and current elite classes. He drew the conclusion that state public officials, constituents, and interest groups do not view higher education as a public good.
Not only has public financial support for higher education leveled out since the mid-twentieth century (Dionne & Kean, 1998), but the bleak financial outlook of the nation has made competition for public financial resources tougher than during prosperous times (Wellman, 2006). For policymakers who feel that the financial aid policy outlined in the Higher Education Act is akin to giving a “free ride” (Gladieux & King, 1999, p. 162), the current financial climate provides a convenient opportunity to scale back financial aid. The view of higher education as a private good now has enough traction to divert federal funds away from student aid and to distance the federal government from its former role of promoting greater access to higher education through student aid (Baum & Ma, 2007; Labaree, 1997; St. John, 2004). In fact, the federal government has reduced its financial support for higher education due to increasing beliefs among policymakers that education is a private good and students should therefore bear the costs (Heller & Rogers, 2006; Rosen, 2005). Even within universities, some university leaders see the use of resources to support public service objectives as a “drain of resources from the central responsibility of the university” (McDowell, 2001, p. 19). However, many argue that decreased availability of public funds means that colleges and universities need to demonstrate how they provide public service and contribute to society (Gladieux & King, 1999; Kellogg Commission, 1998; McDowell, 2001; Shannon, 1982).

Diminishing fiscal resources also prompt faculty and institutional leaders to seek funding streams from the development of new products (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). This trend is one of the core assumptions of academic capitalism. The origins of the concept of “academic capitalism” trace back to institutions’ efforts to generate revenue from nontraditional sources for university research (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). Regardless of whether the activity is for profit or not, the result is a growing market-orientation and a movement away from the public good model of higher education (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).
Whatever colleges and universities believe to be their contributions to the public good, an additional issue is whether those contributions promote the betterment of society in a way that balances the private benefits that are produced. For instance, academic research and teaching can become examples of the growing academic capitalism in academia (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), or they can support the idea of learning for learning’s sake. In addition, although basic research—as opposed to applied research—has yielded important discoveries with unforeseen utility in widespread applications, there must be some balance between pure research and research that focuses on social issues. Some reports and scholars have even suggested that for scholarship to be relevant to society, it must be engaged in current social issues and that without such engagement, research and scholarship becomes irrelevant (Kellogg Commission, 1999; McDowell, 2001). More likely, it is important that colleges and universities demonstrate their continuing relevance in American society through meaningful contributions such as preparing students for citizenship, preserving and creating knowledge, and engaging in other activities that serve the nation’s interests (Gumport, 2001).

Finally, decreasing availability of public funds presents an additional challenge for colleges and universities to engage in work that contributes to the public good. If higher education is an investment in the future of the nation, then “education should be readily and widely accessible” and must take into account “the uniqueness of individuals” (Bowen, 1977, p. 37). However, if higher education becomes more inaccessible or does not take into account the uniqueness of individuals, potential benefits to the individual or society may be compromised.

The challenges described above bring the discussion full circle to the issue of institutional diversity. The Council for Aid to Education examined the fiscal crisis in higher education and recommended that in order to fulfill the social contract, public and nonprofit private institutions should “pursue greater mission differentiation” (Dionne & Kean, 1998, p. 3). Historically Black
colleges and universities, women’s colleges, and evangelical colleges all represent different missions in U.S. higher education. Brief histories of each institutional type and their role in the enterprise are described in the next section.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Historical Development and Emergence of the Niche

With a few notable exceptions, prior to the Civil War, most colleges and universities barred African Americans from matriculation. After the establishment of present-day Cheyney University in 1837, institutions to provide basic education for African Americans began to emerge. In the years following the Civil War, a combination of public and private forces provided the political will and financial resources to establish institutions to educate African-American students separately to become teachers and preachers within the Black community (see e.g., Brown & Davis, 2001; Gasman & Tudico, 2008; Harper, Patton, & Wood, 2009). Prior to 1890, the federal government’s Freedmen’s Bureau partnered with both Black and White churches, religious organizations, and missionary groups to establish the earliest group of Black colleges, which were religious affiliated and public (Anderson, 1988). Holding a missionary view that African Americans were victims of an immoral system, many founders believed that they were called to civilize and educate the former slaves. Harper, Patton, and Wood (2009) interpret the founders’ actions as serving the multiple purposes of alleviating their guilt over slavery and legitimately providing education to freed slaves, but doing so in a way that kept Blacks out of White institutions and steered Blacks into mechanical and practical trades; this enabled them to maintain control over how Blacks were educated. By developing curricula that reflected Euro-centric values and history, White founders established no formal mechanism for Blacks to transmit the history of African Americans in the U.S. as told from the perspective of African Americans.
Motivated by an interest in developing a labor force that could serve their economic interests, the industrial philanthropists helped establish the next round of HBCUs, focusing first on industrial education, then expanding their support to liberal arts education in later years (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). Colleges that were co-founded by religious organizations, such as Fisk in Nashville, Spelman in Atlanta, Paul Quinn in Texas, and Allen University in South Carolina, sought to convert former slaves to Christianity out of concern that “without education … blacks would rapidly degenerate and become a national menace to American civilization (Anderson, 1988, p. 241). HBCU founders faced the major challenge of assuaging the fear of Whites who believed that it was dangerous to educate freed slaves. Leaders like W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington had to balance others’ fears against their ambitions to effectively use education as a vehicle for improving the lives of African Americans (Allen & Jewell, 2002). Although both leaders viewed education as critical to racial uplift of the freed slaves in America, Du Bois’ view placed the accent on a liberal arts approach and investment in an elite class of Blacks who could provide leadership to the entire race. Washington’s view, though sometimes framed as being in complete conflict with that of Du Bois, emphasized a vocational approach and the importance of developing trade skills.

The Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 were key in the establishment of 71 HBCUs (Lucas, 2006; Rudolph, 1962). The first Morrill Act allocated federal funds for the creation of state institutions. The second Morrill Act, which again allocated federal funds to state-level institutions on an annual basis, required distribution of funds to colleges and universities in an equitable manner, which effectively mandated inclusion of African Americans in these federally supported institutions. The 1890 Act, combined with the 1896 Plessy v. Supreme Court, firmly established the “separate but equal” doctrine. During that period, the many separate colleges that states created for African Americans became known as the “1890 institutions” and constitute
many of the present-day Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned the doctrine of separate but equal, asserting that with two separate systems of education, one is inherently inferior. In establishing an “affirmative duty to dismantle segregated systems of higher education” (Brown, 2001, p. 50), the *Brown v. Board* decision was an important moment in the history of race relations and education in the U.S., but the reality was that African Americans and other racial minorities continued to have limited access to higher education. Additionally, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which served the majority of African Americans, continued to remain underfunded.

Lack of support for HBCUs was not surprising given the widespread but often tacit belief that HBCUs served as “‘holding institutions’ so that Black students would not matriculate in historically White colleges and universities” (Evans, Evans, & Evans, 2002, p. 3). Because HBCUs provided access to higher education for the majority of African Americans, Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) did not rush to integrate African Americans. As a result, the holding institutions, which were made up largely of institutions that offered vocational education, limited the educational opportunities and choices for African-American students. Until the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, HBCUs initially met the legal standard of providing separate but equal public accommodations, opportunities, and social benefits required by *Plessy v. Ferguson* (Kutler, 1984).

One of the successes of the Civil Rights Movement was that by law, public educational institutions could no longer lawfully exclude African Americans. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of race or ethnicity. At the postsecondary level, this meant that Predominantly White Institutions, also referred to as Traditionally White Institutions, were required to integrate African Americans. Failure to comply with the Civil Rights Act would make educational institutions ineligible for federal dollars, a disincentive connected to colleges’
and universities’ dependence on public funds.

The federal government’s recognition of the unique missions of HBCUs has facilitated steady federal funding for HBCUs through the present day (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). In 1965, the Higher Education Act authorized financial support for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Then during the Reagan Administration, Historically Black Colleges and Universities gained additional financial resources under Executive Order 12320 (Roebuck & Murty). Despite federal allocations to support Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the colleges, which are public, have been and continue to be significantly underfunded. HBCUs face the threat of closing or finding creative ways to strengthen their educational programs and offerings. One example of the creative generation of resources is the partnership developed between North Carolina A&T and University of North Carolina at Greensboro to establish a master’s program and joint school. Programs such as these may support the long-term viability of HBCUs.

In the 1990s, some states, such as Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee, were ordered by the Supreme Court to eliminate HBCUs or educationally justify them (Wenglinsky, 1996). Interestingly, the principles that both justify and support the existence of institutional diversity (Eckel & King, 2006) can be used as rationales for and against the integration of HBCUs. On one hand, public HBCUs can be viewed as extensions of the state and should thus seek to serve all racial groups equally. On the other hand, private, nonprofit HBCUs can be viewed as the commitment of a group of private citizens seeking to express themselves and their needs through a privately run institution.

Christopher Brown (2001) argues that HBCUs fulfill a social contract that emerged during the post-Civil War reconstruction era. As evidence of a social contract to redress the ills of slavery, Brown points to constitutional amendments, federal legislation, and the HBCUs.
Brown further argues that the HBCUs generate and purvey social capital to African Americans in the relations, networks, and resources—attitudes, behaviors, and expectations—that they make available to students. Furthermore, HBCUs’ legal and social position gives them standing to “advance the interests of African Americans” (p. 41). HBCUs’ historical legacy is therefore based in commitment to racial uplift and community empowerment.

**Contributions to the Public Good**

Over time, HBCUs have become critical to the advancement of African Americans in the U.S. (Allen & Jewell, 2002). It should be acknowledged that some Historically Black Colleges and Universities are no longer predominantly Black, and some are even Predominantly White (Evans, Evans, & Evans, 2002). For the purposes of this study, the remainder of this discussion will focus on the Historically Black Colleges and Universities that remain predominantly African American. Much of the research described in this section draws conclusions based on predominantly Black populations.

HBCUs have provided a variety of benefits to individuals. While constituting only three percent of U.S. colleges and universities, HBCUs have produced as much as 16 percent of the nation’s African-American college graduates (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). The most widely held perspective is that Black students at HBCUs have reported higher academic achievement, social involvement, and career aspirations compared to their counterparts at Predominantly White Institutions (Allen, 1988, 1992). African Americans at HBCUs are more likely to pursue graduate studies and are better prepared than African Americans who attend Predominantly White Institutions (Wenglinsky, 1996). Of the total number of African Americans who earn doctorates in the sciences and engineering, many earned their baccalaureate degrees at HBCUs (Burrelli & Rapoport, 2008). Some dissenting studies suggest that African-American students at HBCUs perform no differently than their counterparts at Predominantly White Institutions (Kim,
HBCUs exhibit the same enrollment and degree completion rates as Predominantly White Institutions in the South despite being underfunded (Perna, Milem, Gerald, Baum, Rowan, & Hutchens, 2006) and despite enrolling larger numbers of academically underprepared students (Kim, 2004).

Other research has confirmed the aforementioned findings and expanded on the positive influence that HBCUs have on students (e.g., Cokley, 2002; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002). Researchers have come to believe that the positive impact that HBCUs have on Black students is due to the welcoming, supportive, and encouraging environment that HBCUs create (Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002). At many campuses, African-American students are more involved in the academic life of the institution than are African Americans at others institutions (Kim, 2004). Finally, at HBCUS, Black students are less likely to encounter racism, alienation, and isolation (Allen, 1992).

The social, economic, and political benefits that HBCUs produce are important, as well. Joyce Nichols (2004) reviewed a series of studies about Black college students (Allen, Epps, & Haniff, 1991) and concluded that HBCUs have come to serve a variety of purposes, including maintaining Black American culture and providing leadership and role models for the Black community in social, political, and economic matters. HBCUs prepare graduates for leadership and service in communities (Fleming, 1984; Roebuck & Murty, 1993), as well as prepare them for participation in national and global life (Brown, 2001).

HBCUs also educate students who might not otherwise attain a college education (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). In this way, HBCUs are champions in what Walter Allen and Joseph Jewell (2002) explain is “the centuries-old struggle for access and parity in higher education [that] has been problematic of their larger fight for equality and group recognition in America” (p. 242). An HBCU education also has provided for the acquisition of skills that African
Americans could use to address issues of equality and justice (Albritton, 2012). They served as a center for African-American progressive political activism during the Civil Rights Movement (Mbaekwe, 2006) and were sites of protest (Allen & Jewell, 2002). Overall, HBCUs are sites of empowerment and resistance. HBCUs are promoters of group advancement and community empowerment, unlike their Predominantly White Institution counterparts, which are not sites of contestation.

One way to recategorize the benefits to individuals and to society is to consider whether the benefits constitute cultural empowerment or economic development. Freeman and Cohen conceptualize cultural empowerment as “the procedures through which a group of people develop a belief system in their capabilities—that is, their ability to achieve” (2001, p. 587). Cultural empowerment is most directly facilitated through education and is dependent upon individuals understanding and taking pride in their cultural history and heritage. Freeman and Cohen further argue that in order to bridge the functions of cultural empowerment and economic development, HBCUs need to educate students about African-American history and culture, reinforce students’ psychological well-being, and play a role in developing networks.

**Challenges to the Future Existence of HBCUs**

According to Brown (2001), *United States v. Kirk Fordice* was the Supreme Court case that helped usher in the present-day challenging environment for HBCUs. The ruling in this case was that policies and practices that discourage or inhibit students from choosing HBCUs constitute vestiges of segregation. Desegregation policies have used demographic data as the metric for compliance with desegregation mandates (Brown, 2001). Policies or practices, even if conceptualized to be race-neutral if they resulted in dual systems of education demarcated by racially identifiable institutions, were unlawful (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). Further, it was not sufficient for an institution to employ race-neutral policies to meet the federal mandate
to desegregate educational institutions. Institutions had to provide educational justification for any policies that seemed to support segregation and had to show that policies could not be practicably eliminated.

HBCUs, in general, are not racially diverse and therefore do not meet the standards of being sufficiently desegregated. As a result, these institutions face the threat of being eliminated. Some would argue that this circumstance is partly a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 mandating Predominantly White Institutions to take action to desegregate, but not issuing the same mandate to HBCUs (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2010). In applicable states, the mandate for HBCUs to desegregate indicates a lack of understanding and a reticence to consider the “unique positionality of HBCUs” (Brown, 2001, p. 47).

In addition to being accused of perpetuating segregation, another criticism of HBCUs is that they promote low academic standards (Guy-Sheftall, 2006; Nichols, 2004), and perhaps for this reason they face “demotion threats” (Evans, Evans, & Evans, 2002, p. 11)—from the status of a university to a community college, for example. They are also accused of showing poor retention and graduations rates (Brower & Ketterhagen, 2004; Nettles, Wagener, Millett, & Killenbeck, 1999). From this perspective, investment in HBCUs would be an inefficient use of public funds that could be invested in colleges with high retention and graduation rates.

Finally, HBCUs have been struggling to maintain accreditation in the last several decades (Keels, 2004). The accreditation process examines infrastructure; institutional finances, including endowments; and technology; and by some accounts, accreditation standards are “based on the archetype of predominately-white [sic] institutions” (Wershbale, 2010, p. 68). After the loss of accreditation, many HBCUs have closed or experienced significant difficulties staying open (Keels). Loss of accreditation also means loss of eligibility for federal funds, which makes it difficult for many HBCUs to operate, let alone develop institutional supports and infrastructures.
that might meet accreditation standards.

**The Current State of HBCUs**

Today there are 105 HBCUs (Department of the Interior, n.d.) that are located in 19 states (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009b), down from more than two hundred that were established before 1890 (Brown, 2002). Comparing the mission statements of all HBCUs to a random sample of four-year colleges and universities, Abelman and Dalessandro (2009b) found less variability among HBCU mission statements. They concluded that although the consistency across mission statements “helps give definition and branding to these institutions, it may also hinder efforts to identify and promote key characteristics and academic aspirations that make each institution distinctive and appealing” (p. 124). In other words, although an individual HBCU’s goals may differ from other HBCUs based on the interests of those who established the institution, HBCUs have historically shared the goals of educating Black students and uplifting the race (Gasman & Tudico, 2008).

The survival of HBCUs is not guaranteed. Those who believe that the educational system has been desegregated in an effective way or that Black students experience educational equity in Predominantly White Institutions suggest that there is no longer a need for HBCUs. Additionally, others who feel that HBCUs contribute to segregated forms of higher education may also oppose the continued existence of HBCUs (for discussions of some of the forces working against HBCUs, see Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009 or Richardson & Harris, 2004). The U.S. Supreme Court reflected the latter perspective in its 1992 ruling in the *Fordice* case, concluding that the state of Mississippi had not sufficiently desegregated its system of higher education (Brown, 2001). Whichever of these two perspectives one takes, the questions that arise are the same: What societal needs do HBCUs fulfill? What roles do HBCUs play in U.S. higher education? Is the work of HBCUs still necessary? Relevant? Unique?
Women’s Colleges

Historical Development and Emergence of the Niche

The end of the Civil War ushered in a re-examination of the status of African Americans that “logically extended to a reconsideration of the status of women” (Solomon, 1985, p. 45). Whereas African Americans were excluded from higher education because of their racial status, women were generally excluded because they were considered “mentally inferior to men and … [incapable of withstanding] the physical strain of higher learning” (Newcomer, 1969, pp. 26-28). In admitting Black students and women, Oberlin was an exception to these trends. In addition to women’s efforts to gain the right to pursue higher education and the social [rehabilitation] that followed the Civil War, both the expansion of public higher education and a growing need for an educated work force broadened access to higher education for women (Solomon, 1985). By the middle of the nineteenth century, Catherine Beecher, Mary Lyon, and Emma Willard, along with others, had established the first women’s colleges (Tidball, 1973). These colleges generally provided the equivalent of a high school education and served largely as normal schools, preparing students for teaching (Newcomer, 1959).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, founders had established 150 women’s colleges (Tidball, Smith, Tidball, & Wolf-Wendel, 1999), which were supplemented by coordinate colleges for women that were distinct but affiliated with established all-male institutions (Lucas, 2006). Mabel Newcomer (1959) argues that coordinate colleges were a compromise between two camps that held opposing views about admitting women to male colleges that were already in existence. Georgia Female College, known today as Wesleyan College, was chartered in 1836 and became the first women’s college in the U.S. (Lucas, 2006). Several former female seminaries soon followed suit and began to offer academic degree programs (Lucas, 2006).
Just prior to the Civil War, the idea took root that education was critical to the successful functioning of a democracy, resulting in the rapid expansion of the public school system and necessitating the preparation of more teachers (Newcomer, 1959). This concern about developing an educated citizenry facilitated a major influx of women into higher education, which was absorbed primarily by women’s colleges. Perhaps the more practical and compelling reason for opening up higher education to women for the purposes of teacher training was that women teachers were paid less than men and constituted a cheap labor force (Rosenberg, 1988).

Similar to the earliest supporters of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, advocates and founders were not necessarily seeking social or political equality for women (Newcomer, 1959). There was no agreement about the purpose of providing higher education to women and whether it should reflect the same content and goals of the education men were receiving. Some founders, such as Catherine Beecher (established Hartford Female Seminary 1823) and Mary Lyon (established Mount Holyoke in 1837), sought to prepare students for professional goals of teaching, whereas Sophia Smith (established Smith College in 1871) and Joseph Taylor (established Bryn Mawr in 1885) sought to provide a college education that was of the same quality as that of men (Newcomer).

Eventually more than 300 women’s colleges came into being (Langdon, 2001), including the famous Seven Sisters colleges—Wellesley, Radcliffe, Mount Holyoke, Smith, Vassar, Barnard, and Bryn Mawr (Thelin, 2004). The emerging women’s colleges served as finishing schools for wealthier young women (Langdon, 2001) and prepared women to be teachers (Solomon, 1985; Tidball, et al., 1999). By 1910, 71 percent of colleges admitted women (Rudolph, 1962), but women’s colleges remained popular because they maintained a “separate female sphere” (Solomon, 1985, p. 47). Women’s colleges succeeded largely because they could offer their female students a “guaranteed welcome” (Solomon, 1985, p. 47). At women’s
colleges, “the total development of women [was] taken seriously by the entirety of the community” and their mission statements reflected “woman-supportive language” (Tidball, et al., 1999, pp. xx, 121).

**Contributions to Public Good**

Like HBCUs, women’s colleges continue to benefit individuals and society in ways that relate to their original missions. There is overwhelming agreement that students at women’s colleges experience greater gains in academic ability than do women at co-educational institutions (Astin, 1977, 1993; Kim & Alvarez, 1995; Smith, 1990; Tidball, 1980, 1983). Considering a range of academic experiences, Alexander Astin (1977) found that students at women’s colleges reported greater academic development, faculty interaction, and intellectual self-esteem along with higher rates of baccalaureate degree completion and graduate degree aspiration compared to women at co-ed institutions. In 1982, Robert Hall and Bernice Sandler proposed the “chilly classroom” theory, arguing that male students monopolize classroom discussions and teachers favor male students over female students. They further argued that the resulting “chilly classroom” discourages women’s participation in the classroom and undermines women’s career aspirations. At women’s colleges, the demographic composition has made this “chilly classroom” phenomenon impossible (Langdon, 2001). As Elizabeth Tidball argues, aspects of the women’s college environment may promote greater academic achievement, in part because women feel valued and are encouraged to excel (1973, 1980, 1985). The “chilly classroom” theory may help explain why, compared to their counterparts at co-ed institutions, students at women’s colleges have been found to pursue studies in male-dominated academic fields more frequently (Carnegie Commission, 1973), and women of color have especially been found to pursue graduate degrees at disproportionately high rates (Thelin, 2004).

Other research on women’s colleges has indicated that students at women’s colleges were
more likely to develop student leadership skills (Astin, 1977; Kim & Alvarez, 1995; Whitt, 1994) and achieve higher levels of career advancement (Tidball, 1973) compared to women at co-ed institutions. This finding, specific to certain time periods and variable by institutional selectivity, might be attributed to higher levels of self-reported academic ability and self-confidence among students at women’s colleges when compared to their counterparts (Kim & Alvarez, 1995; Kim, 2002). Still other research has found that in addition to being sensitive to sexism and gender issues, women’s colleges have encouraged interaction among students with different socioeconomic and racial backgrounds (Kinzie, Palmer, Thomas, Umbach, & Kuh, 2007). Overall, explanations for women’s success at women’s colleges have been tied to greater opportunities to hold leadership roles (Carnegie Commission, 1973) and the high number of women faculty who contribute to a supportive environment (Tidball, 1973), although more recent scholarship challenges the latter explanation (Kim & Alvarez, 1995; Miller-Bernal, 1993).

Women’s colleges make an important societal contribution in producing disproportionately large numbers of women who enter science fields (Tidball, 1985, 1986; Rosenberg, 1988) and become public leaders, including elected officials and college presidents (e.g., Rice & Hemmings, 1988; Harwarth, Maline, & DeBra, 1997). This particular outcome benefits both the individual and society in diversifying the workforce.

Current scholarship on women’s colleges is limited, though much of it confirms prior research. Some research has yielded discrepant findings, including that women’s college graduates do not report significantly different critical-thinking abilities, analytic skills, or problem-solving skills (see e.g., Kim, 2002). A limited amount of contemporary literature does not imply that the validity of previous findings should be questioned; however, it does raise the question as to whether the impact of women’s colleges is significantly different today.

**Challenges to the Future Existence of Women’s Colleges**

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Two longstanding challenges that many, though not all, women’s colleges face include academically underprepared students and underfunding (Newcomer, 1959). In response, many women’s colleges established remedial or preparatory education. At different points in history, women’s institutions have changed their status and designations from college to junior college. Financial challenges often force institutions to make difficult decisions that run counter to their ideals. In the days when male single-sex colleges were common, men transformed them into co-educational institutions to boost enrollment (Langdon, 2001). Numerous women’s colleges, such as Vassar, have also made the decision to become co-ed institutions in order to remain financially viable. Embodied in the Mills College strike of 1990 is the type of action required to resist resorting to co-education for financial reasons (Rhoads, 1998). Mills College students and alumnae, and later faculty and staff, protested the board of trustee’s decision to become co-educational by shutting down the college and organizing a plan to raise enough funds to stem the tide. Their efforts were successful, but are atypical and unlikely to be repeated at most other women’s colleges.

In addition to the challenges outlined above, perhaps the greatest challenge to the continued existence of women’s colleges is legal in nature. The successful legal challenges that required men’s colleges to admit women are now echoed in the questions raised about the legal status of all single-sex colleges (Solomon, 1985). A highly visible debate about the lawfulness of single-sex colleges surfaced in the 1996 Supreme Court case U.S. v. Virginia. In this case, the Court ruled that restricting admission to men only at the Virginia Military Institute was unconstitutional and that creating a separate institution for women was not an appropriate remedy (Cowan, 1996). The court’s opinion established that public institutions must articulate an “exceedingly persuasive justification” for practices that are sex-based (p. 148). This standard was based upon strong government interest in achieving a particular goal and required that “reasoned
analysis” be the basis of educational practice rather than an educational practice being an artifact of “traditional assumptions.”

According to Janella Miller (1984), there are three main obvious foundations for challenging the admissions policies at women’s colleges. The first of these three is U.S. Code 42, Section 1983, which allows a private citizen to pursue legal action against another individual acting under “color of state law” (p. 154). Another legal foundation is based in Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, which prohibits sex discrimination in institutions that receive federal funds. Finally, federal tax codes excuse charitable institutions from any tax liabilities.

Miller cites several cases that illustrate the impending threat to women’s colleges, including Mississippi University for Women v. Hogan, in which the Supreme Court ruled that an admissions policy that bars men from a state-supported nursing program was unlawful. The decision was written in such a way that hinted that private single-sex colleges may also violate the Fourteenth Amendment’s equal protection clause. According to Miller (1984), the court found that “merit and individual justice should be guiding considerations unless remedial measures are needed to remedy blatant discrimination against women in the past” and that women’s institutions should be eliminated as women are assimilated into male-dominated or co-ed institutions (pp. 167-168). Miller further argues that the assumptions that underlie this case and standards that emerge are insufficient for defending the constitutionality of women’s colleges. Instead, legal standards for women’s colleges must be based on an acknowledgement that men and women are not treated equally. Public policy goals that drive judicial decision-making should not be about assimilation of women into a male-constructed or male-dominated society, but instead should provide the basis by which women can change and reconstruct the society in which they live.

Women’s colleges may be the only mechanism for developing the resources and stimuli
for empowerment among future female leaders who can be immersed in a women-centered
cultural environment that educates them and reinforces historical understandings about the status
of women in the U.S. In doing so, women’s colleges can generate the momentum and agents to
enact social change that improves the standing of women in the broader society. Voluntary
separation of women’s colleges might be acceptable under the holdings from *U.S. v. Virginia* on
the grounds that such single-sex education seeks to address historical discrimination and helps to
prevent similar discrimination in the future (Cowan, 1996).

The original women’s colleges provided access to women who were legally excluded
from all-male institutions. Now that most institutions are co-educational, many question the
legality and necessity of women’s colleges. Although many scholars and women’s colleges’
administrators argue the most critical contributions of women’s colleges are to equity for women
in the broader society (see e.g., Langdon, 2001), much research needs to be done to explore and
articulate what those contributions are and how they are created.

**The Current Status of Women’s Colleges**

In 1998, fewer than 80 women’s colleges remained, down from 142 in 1972 (Schmidt,
1988) and approximately 300 in the 1960s (Harwarth, 1999). According to the National Center
for Education Statistics (n.d.), there may be as few as 51 today. In the mid-twentieth century,
many women’s colleges began to admit men in order to remain financially viable and to respond
to students’ increasing interest in co-education (Solomon, 1985). Most colleges have become co-
ed, and as a result, women’s colleges no longer serve the role of providing access to higher
education for women (Langdon, 2001). The steep decline in the number of women’s colleges
seems to reflect a growing disinterest in single-sex education, but the continued persistence of
several dozen may indicate that this institutional type represents an important niche in American
higher education. In the present day, do the remaining women’s colleges continue to promote the
needs of their niche communities?

Some researchers (Kim & Alvarez, 1995) have encouraged public policy makers to continue supporting women’s colleges because of their overall longstanding record of efficacy in education. Ruth Schmidt, former president and provost at multiple women’s colleges, asserted that women’s colleges are the best institutional hope for women’s advancement in the U.S. for their provision of “respite from a sexist society,” for their facilitation of women into male-dominated fields, and for their willingness to provide structures that more fully address and support women’s needs (1988).

Evangelical Christian Colleges

Historical Development and Emergence of the Niche

In contrast to HBCUs and women’s colleges, Protestant Christian colleges have been part of the landscape of American higher education since its inception. Motivated by a sense of religious awakening (Rudolph, 1962), the colonial colleges—characterized by “a rising tide of denominationalism”—pursued the goals of preparing civic leaders (Lucas, 2006, p. 106) and instilling in students values befitting a “Christian gentleman” (Thelin, 2004, p. 24). Although many scholars contend that the colonial colleges had the goal of preparing clergy, there has been some disagreement over this point, with other scholars asserting the colonial colleges provided professional preparation for male students (Lucas, 2006; Newcomer, 1959). In the colonial colleges, Christianity “gave college leaders their fundamental notion of the nature of the universe” (Veysey, 1965, p. 25). Eventually, the religious fervor subsided for several decades, until the U.S. experienced a second Great Awakening during which Christian groups founded most of the colleges that sprang up in the nineteenth century (Lucas, 2006; Rudolph, 1962). Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Unitarians, and various other Christian denominations founded colleges as the nation expanded westward, and
these denominations helped make the U.S. “a land of colleges” (Rudolph, 1962). Eventually, the religious fervor of this second Great Awakening faded as the nation and the academy became increasingly secular (Reuben, 1996; Thelin, 2004). Through the late 1800s, it was commonplace for colleges and universities to be affiliated with a Christian church (Burtchaell, 1998).

Throughout the twentieth century, many religious colleges, including most of the Ivy League, became more secularized or shed their ecclesiastical roots altogether when they found their religious traditions to be at odds with their pursuit of truth (Reuben, 1996) or detrimental to their search for academic prestige (Marsden, 1996). Many of the Protestant colleges secularized their missions for practical reasons rather than as a rejection of religion itself (Burtchaell, 1992, 1998). However, beginning in the 1960s, evangelical Christian colleges experienced a resurgence in their enrollments in contrast to other religious colleges, HBCUs, and women’s colleges (Carlberg, 2000; Flory, 2002; Riley, 2005). Judson Carlberg (2000) may thus be correct in asserting that evangelical Protestantism gives primacy to Scripture “as a source of knowledge of God and a guide to Christian living” and stresses personal religious conversion, but it remains distinct from Christian Fundamentalism, which preaches a “return to biblical orthodoxy” and espouses anti-intellectualism (p. 226). Therefore, although there are hundreds of Christian colleges, there are important distinctions between fundamentalist, evangelical, and mainline Protestant Christian colleges. James Burtchaell (1998) asserted that evangelical Christian colleges are “joined more by a common style than a common denomination. That style is typically biblical in preaching, mildly Wesleyan or Calvinist in theology, congregational in polity, conservative in ethics and politics, enthusiastic and informal in ritual, cautious toward the regnant culture, plain in manners” (p. 743). For the purposes of this study, the discussion of Christian colleges is limited to evangelical Christian colleges, which constitute one of the most rapidly growing institutional types in the U.S. (Adrian, 2003).
Evangelical Christian colleges that are voluntary members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) are an even more discrete group. The initial motivation for creating the CCCU in 1971 was to facilitate collaboration among mission-aligned institutions on issues of finance, enrollment, and religious identity (Patterson, 2005). CCCU member organizations can be nondenominational or come from a diversity of Christian denominations including, but not limited to, Assembly of God, Baptist, Church of Christ, Mennonite, Free Methodist, and Presbyterian. To differentiate evangelical Christian institutions from fundamentalist Christian institutions, the CCCU made a commitment to use the National Association of Evangelicals’ statement of faith as the core reference document regarding religious doctrine (Patterson).

The criteria and application for membership in the CCCU suggest that one of the things that “distinguishes these institutions from other religious colleges or universities is that they have a public, board-approved institutional mission or purpose statement that is Christ-centered and rooted in the historic Christian faith” (Abelman & Dalessandro 2009a, p. 87). The CCCU is careful to distinguish its members from other Christian institutions such as Oral Roberts University and Liberty University, the latter of which has never been approved as a member, using the criterion that member institutions must be compatible with the missions and operations of existing members (Patterson, 2005).

In the broader higher education landscape, evangelical Christian colleges express a unified voice via the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (Patterson, 2005). Evangelical Christian colleges offer forms of higher education that are grounded in and shaped by a strong Christian faith (Cumings, Haworth, & O’Neill, 2001). In this way, they transmit knowledge and values unique to Christians and serve the Christian community by acting as a foil against what Burtchaell (1998) laments as the continuing secularization of higher education.
Contributions to the Public Good

It can be argued that evangelical Christian colleges, like Historically Black Colleges and Universities and women’s colleges, provide benefits to individuals and to society. Evangelical Christian colleges attract students with strong religious beliefs, and compared to students at most other institutions, students who attend colleges affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) develop stronger faith (Railsback, 2006). However, the research has been mixed as to whether evangelical Christian higher education produces the outcomes that evangelical leaders wish to see. On the one hand, James Hunter (1987) found that evangelical college students reflect the same levels of political conservatism as earlier generations, with 25 percent favoring the Equal Rights Amendment and 18 percent favoring “allowing homosexuals to teach in public schools” (p. 132). In contrast, though evangelical college students “know what they ‘should’ believe” regarding orthodox Christian teachings, they seem to have struggled to accept it emotionally (Hunter, 1987, p. 39). James Penning and Corwin Smidt replicated the Hunter study fifteen years later and reached a different conclusion, arguing that an evangelical college education strengthens students’ religious faith (2002). They concluded that students who attended evangelical colleges maintained a “high level of orthodoxy with regard to historic tenets of the Christian faith … a high level of traditional evangelical religious practice”—a pattern that remained consistent over time (Penning & Smidt, 2002, pp. 66-67). Specific experiences within Christian colleges, such as Bible study, community workshop opportunities, and interactions with faculty and peers, exerted positive influences on students’ spiritual development (Ma, 2003). Samuel Schuman offered yet a third perspective that at Christian colleges, students’ religious faith does not change significantly after four years (2010). The mixed findings have been important to current leaders of the evangelical Christian churches because, as is true of HBCUs and women’s colleges, evangelical Christian colleges have been viewed as an important
source of future leaders grounded in a particular religious tradition (Penning & Smidt, 2002; Riley, 2005).

There exists a growing body of empirical work about the influences of an evangelical Christian college education on students (Penning & Smidt, 2002; Riley, 2005), and there is much historical work about the development of mainline Protestant and evangelical Christian colleges (e.g., Carpenter & Shipps, 1987; Litfin, 2004). There is also a reasonable amount of conceptual and theoretical writing about the position and future of evangelical Christian colleges (Schuman, 2010; Yancey, 2010). Although evangelical Christian colleges emerged to serve a specific population with specific needs, there is limited scholarship about the impact that Christian colleges have on communities beyond the campus boundaries or on Christian communities. Nor is there a large body of work exploring whether and how Christian colleges advance the needs of their communities. With this caveat, some claims can still be made.

Evangelical colleges in the CCCU have strong missionary commitments illustrated by their missionary work and international service in addressing issues of hunger, health, agriculture, and religion (Adrian, 2003). On the surface, such missionary work can be classified as a societal benefit as conceptualized in this discussion. Additionally, evangelical Christian colleges help to perpetuate the evangelical Christian community by transmitting the theological and moral views espoused that are central to evangelicals and providing a structure to help students strengthen their religious faith (Penning & Smidt, 2002).

Challenges to the Future Existence of Evangelical Christian Colleges

Leaders and members of Evangelical Christian colleges may hold the belief that “Christian thought and morality are ‘best’ for every culture” (Smith, 1987, p. 6). Whether this perspective is widely held does not matter on some level. The guarantee of free expression in the U.S. protects evangelical Christians in their viewpoints and in their right to establish private
institutions that are consistent with their beliefs. Those who perceive evangelical Christian colleges to be advancing their beliefs beyond the boundaries of their campuses may take issue with the notion that leaders of these colleges believe that Christian thought and morality are best for all cultures. A logically related concern is that in providing a college education grounded in Christian faith, Christian colleges seek to indirectly affect American culture and infuse it with Christian values. The latter concern is anathema to those who do not subscribe to a Christian worldview, to those who value religious diversity, and to those who believe that religion is a private matter that does not belong in the public sphere (Penning & Smidt, 2002).

A third concern about the idea that Christian college leaders believe Christian thought and morality is best for all cultures stems equally from a distrust of the religious right and from a belief that the Christian faith rejects “norms of tolerance and civility” (Penning & Smidt, 2002, p. 162). The perspective that Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) are conservative is legitimate, and CCCU institutions embrace their conservatism as part of their identity. Case in point: In the late 1980s and 1990s, Myron Augsburger, the president of the CCCU, articulated his personal beliefs that Christian schools should work to dismantle racism and sexism in the interest of equity and justice, but that agenda was not embraced wholeheartedly (Patterson, 2005). There is little empirically based research that indicates that evangelical Christian colleges promote unlawful discrimination. Even if such a body of research existed, the findings are open to interpretation depending on one’s positionality.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for evangelical Christian colleges, particularly those that are members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, is that they experience pressure to forfeit or downplay their religious character and identity in order to improve their academic reputations and gain legitimacy (Adrian, 2003; Burtchaell, 1988). This pressure may stem from the connection researchers have made between religious conservatism and an anti-
modernist view that is intolerant (Tamney & Johnson, 1997), something that is unacceptable within the liberal academy. A commonly used example is the widely held assumption by non-Christians that evangelicals’ approach to science begins with a literal interpretation of the Bible that is then used to shape scientific inquiry (Noll, 1993, 1995; Marsden, 1987).

The Current Status of Evangelical Christian Colleges

Today there are 107 American institutions associated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, n.d.). Religious commitment is essential to their missions as evidenced by their mission statements, their “requirements for faculty to be confessing Christians … their continued commitment to the religious socialization of evangelical young people … [and] requirements for on-campus chapel attendance as well as church attendance on Sunday” (Flory, 2002, p. 350). The growth in the number of evangelical colleges in the last decade has been paralleled by growth in enrollment, with more evangelical students attending college than in previous years (Penning & Smidt, 2002). Compared to enrollment in public universities, enrollment in the CCCU schools grew 27.5 percent compared to 12.8 percent growth in public schools (Kwon, 2005). However, the survival of evangelical Christian colleges has not yet proved to be everlasting. Potential weakening of institutions’ evangelical identities and values that may be at odds with societal values could threaten the colleges’ futures.

James Patterson has identified a concern that the CCCU is softening “evangelical boundaries in the interest of keeping the coalition intact” (2005, p. 53). Specifically, he cites disagreement about what it means for an institution to be Christ-centered or to integrate faith with academics and co-curricular programs, or what it means for faculty to be Christ-centered. In addition, although perceptions of evangelicals and faith-based colleges as “backward clingers to creationism and scriptural literalism” may be out of date (Wolfe, 2006, p. 10), the future of
evangelical colleges is uncertain and is tied, in part, to their religious, social, and political ideologies. For instance, their practice of requiring faculty and students to be practicing Christians and their unresolved debates over issues like abortion and same-sex relationships evoke disapproval and sometimes hostility from the public (Carlberg, 2002). Major issues among evangelicals concern gender equity and the roles of men and women (Bryant, 2006). Some scholars argue that evangelicals are less tolerant of the free expression of homosexuals, atheists, and individuals with leftist political ideologies (Wilcox & Jelen, 1990). For evangelical Christian colleges, survival depends in part on their ability to navigate cultural, religious, and legal conflicts (Weeks, 2002). However, evangelicals “appear to prioritize the conservation of what is in their view the moral basis of the ‘common good’ over the liberal ethic of tolerance” (Woodberry & Smith, 1998, p. 41), leaving us to wonder two things: Whom do evangelicals include in their community? How does an evangelical Christian point of view shape institutional actors’ community engagement?

**Summary of the Literature**

The extant literature explains the emergence of a social contract between higher education institutions and society that is tacitly understood. Furthermore, existing literature describes the benefits that niche colleges and universities provide to individuals and the communities they have historically served. The literature also indicates some unique or distinctive benefits that niche institutions confer upon these groups. Niche institutions provide other benefits to their historical constituencies, such as the engagement of women’s colleges with gender issues and Historically Black Colleges and Universities’ preservation of African-American culture. The literature is less specific about how colleges and universities benefit or challenge society and democracy. Generally speaking, the research indicates that colleges and universities benefit society and advance democracy through knowledge production and
preparation of students for responsible citizenship through a variety of means including broadening students’ viewpoints and helping students to develop critical thinking skills. The contribution this study makes is in identifying the distinctive or unique contributions that three niche institutions make to society and to the further realization of a diverse democracy through their engagement with their historical constituencies or other communities that they prioritized.
CHAPTER THREE
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study will examine the role that niche institutions play in advancing their communities. It will also examine how such work may contribute to the public good and therefore signify a form of democracy in action. Concepts from organizational culture, symbolic interactionism, and political science help frame the issues in this study. Organizational culture provides a theoretical lens for understanding the identities of niche institutions, how institutional actors come to share a set of unifying values and beliefs, and how institutional actors define their communities. Symbolic interactionism frames the examination of how individuals within each institution interpret the environment and subsequently develop lines of action. Finally, notions of inclusion, recognition, and representation provide context for understanding the relationship between institutions, institutional actors, and their communities and broader issues linked to democracy.

Organizational Culture in Higher Education

When Clifford Geertz (1973) wrote that “man is an animal suspended in webs of significance that he himself has spun,” he was asserting the notion that culture is not a naturally occurring phenomenon; human beings create culture to reflect shared meanings (p. 5). The difference between a wink and a blink may be indistinguishable to someone who does not know what a wink is, but to someone who does know the difference, a wink may signify a “conspiratorial signal” (Geertz, 1973, p. 6). However, the wink could just as easily represent a parody of a conspiratorial gesture or it could be a signal that the winker is making a joke. The meaning of the wink, or the “symbol,” cannot be separated from the situation’s context (Geertz, 1973; Hall, 1976). In this example, “most of the information is … in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the
message” therefore, the meaning of the wink is highly dependent on context (Hall, 1976, p. 79).

The wink, when seen as a symbolic action, highlights several important aspects of culture. Discerning a wink from a blink and deciphering the meaning of the wink require an understanding of the situation’s context, which might include the situation itself and other environmental elements. The wink also shows how symbolic action and communication can be nonverbal or physical (high-context) (Hall, 1976). Finally, for the wink to have meaning, all involved parties must share the same interpretation of the symbol.

Symbolic communication, then, “provides valuable clues about effectiveness and organizational culture” (Tierney, 2008, p. 38). Tierney further asserts that effective use of symbols can reinforce an institution’s culture, communicate an institution’s goals or values, and engender support from campus constituents and the surrounding community. It is critical that there is shared understanding of the symbol at use. As an example, the construction of a gate around the perimeter of a campus might be publicly framed as a project to beautify the campus and to demarcate the campus as a space for learning, the symbolism of the gate translating to the college as a gateway to knowledge. However, campus or local community members might view the gate as an intentional, perhaps even unfriendly, effort to separate gown from town. Whichever the case, institutional leaders need to be aware of the range of consequences of symbolic communication, which requires awareness and understanding of organizational culture.

**Culture: Variable or Root Metaphor?**

Broadly speaking, within organizational studies there are two schools of thought on culture. One school views culture as a variable (Smircich, 1983), a product (Kuh & Whitt, 1997), or a tool (Demers, 2007). When culture is viewed as an independent variable external to the organization, culture is “imported into the organization through the membership” and “revealed in the patterns of attitudes and actions of individual organization members” (Smircich, 1983, p.
Culture can also be viewed as an internal variable, manifested in the symbols and rituals an organization produces (Kuh & Whitt, 1997; Smircich, 1983). Over time, and in response to environmental factors, an organization develops shared values and beliefs that are eventually taken for granted and serve as a unifying or cohesive force (Demers, 2007; Schein, 2004; Smircich, 1983). This perspective reflects the belief that culture is something an organization has (Smircich) and something that can be adapted or managed to ensure the organization’s survival (Schein).

The other school of thought frames culture as a process, a root metaphor, something an organization is (Kuh & Whitt, 1997; Smircich, 1983). Scholars in this school hold an interpretivist view of culture and see culture as dynamic and evolving. Culture can be viewed as a system of shared “knowledge and beliefs” which give rise to action and behavior, or it can be viewed as a system of “shared symbols and meanings” (Smircich, 1983, pp. 348, 350). Culture then becomes a framework for studying organizations that directs a researcher to examine symbols and rituals as “generative processes that yield and shape meaning and that are fundamental to the very existence of organization” (Smircich, 1983, p. 353).

Despite the line that seems to have been drawn between functionalists and instrumentalists on the one hand and interpretivists on the other, the two views of culture do not seem to be completely irreconcilable. While I lean toward an interpretivist view of culture and subscribe to culture as a means of understanding how organizations are “[created and maintained] through symbolic action,” I suspect that culture may be a tool that organizational actors might use as a means of survival, particularly in the case of niche institutions.

Levels of Culture and the Environment

In general, many cultural anthropologists assert that there are different levels to culture: “overt and covert, implicit and explicit, things you talk about and things you do not” (Hall, 1976,
The work of Peterson and Spencer (1990) connects with that of Steven Ott (1989) and Edgar Schein (1990) in their model of organizational cultural for higher education institutions. The most visible level of a culture includes the physical elements of a campus that represent or reflect shared meaning, such as architecture and sculptures. Touchdown Jesus at Notre Dame has come to represent the institution’s religious affiliation and strong football athletic program.

The second level of culture, a layer which Peterson and Spencer (1990) suggest includes any organizational saga, comprises artifacts and symbols, including myths and traditions. Organizational saga “is a collective understanding of a unique accomplishment based on historical exploits of a formal organization, offering strong normative bonds within and outside the organization” and involves an “emotional loading” (Clark, 1972, p. 178). However, sagas may also reflect a deeper layer of culture: the institution’s espoused values and beliefs.

A third level of culture involves behavioral patterns (Peterson & Spencer, 1990), organizational structures and processes that may be “easy to observe” but “difficult to decipher” (Schein, 2004, p. 26). Admissions policies and distribution of financial aid based on need versus merit are examples of institutional-level behaviors that are easy to observe, difficult to understand, and thus require careful examination with close attention paid to context. A still deeper level of culture includes an organization’s espoused values and beliefs (Schein, 2004), which are frequently the values that are “widely communicated and that form the institutional identity” (Peterson & Spencer, 1990, p. 11).

At the deepest and least explicit level of culture are the organization’s embedded or unconscious values and beliefs (Peterson & Spencer, 1990; Schein, 2004). This final layer could very well be considered the core of institutional culture in that it “guides members’ daily actions” (Peterson & Spencer, 1990, p. 11).

Two final points are important for understanding organizational culture. First, an
institution may not always have a single, unified culture; instead it may have several subcultures or it may even have the “simultaneous existence of two seemingly contradictory values or purposes” (Peterson & Spencer, 1990, p. 15). As an example, reactions to the campus-based Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) can reveal strong subcultures that are opposed, on principle, to the connections between higher education and the military. Second, every organization is in constant interaction with its external environment. Individuals who are not part of the immediate campus, such as donors, alumni, and religious organizations, can play a role in shaping an institution’s culture (Kuh & Whitt, 1997). Perhaps because of the interplay between the “external environment” and the institution, an institution’s culture may reflect the values and accepted practices of American society (Kuh & Whitt, 1997, p. v).

Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades’ (2004) theory of academic capitalism was not a major thrust of this study’s theoretical framework; however, precisely for the reason that external forces influence institutional cultures, academic capitalism was an important consideration in understanding the third level of culture described above. Their work is part of a growing body of theoretical and empirical scholarship about neoliberalism and the neoliberal university (see e.g., Giroux, 2002; Rhoads, 2003; Rhoads & Liu, 2009; Rhoads & Rhoades, 2005; Rhoads & Torres, 2006; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000; Slocum & Rhoads, 2009). Torres and Rhoads (2006) explain that neoliberalism is an ideology that values free markets over regulated markets. They go on to explain how the neoliberal influence on universities promotes efficiency and accountability, accreditation and universalization, international competitiveness, and privatization of goods and services. According to Torres and Rhoads, supporters of privatization consider the marketplace as the ideal regulator.

Within this neoliberal school of thought, Slaughter and Rhoades posit that colleges and universities have drifted away from the position that higher education is a public good to which
all citizens have a claim toward the perspective that higher education is a private good for which individuals should bear the cost. Many of the increasingly accepted practices within U.S. higher education reflect an academic capitalist thrust. Academic capitalism in the new economy suggests that colleges and universities professionalize their traditional programs to improve their market standing with students and also in response to pressure to provide a practical education. The interests and demands of prospective students and families stimulate institutions to market themselves to these groups and compete for their patronage. Resource challenges lead some institutions to shape admissions policies that yield students from wealthier and more privileged backgrounds or to turn to international markets to recruit students; in some cases, these strategies may even be related. Finally, though a public good model and an academic capitalist model can co-exist or overlap, the tension between the two provides a useful point of comparison, perhaps even a spectrum for understanding institutions’ community outreach and engagement efforts.

**Institutional Identity**

Culture may be the most appropriate “theoretical framework for defining … identity” (Tierney, 2008, p. 105). An organization’s unique culture may inspire “members’ identification with the organization” (Demers, 2007, p. 79). Furthermore, aspects of culture, such as Clark’s (1972) concept of saga, may provide the basis for identity and sense of unity among members. The cohesiveness and strength of an institution’s identity may impact not only an institution’s leadership and decision-making, but also its pursuit of mission (Tierney, 2008).

The literature on organizational culture is vast, but it does not offer a single, clear definition of the concept *institutional identity*. Marvin Peterson and Melinda Spencer (1990) assert that an institution’s espoused values and beliefs “form the institutional identity” (p. 11). Christiane Demers (2007) claims that organizational identity is “traditionally defined as what is enduring and central in the organizational self-concept” (p. 91). William Tierney (2008) notes
that institutional “identity begins with mission but goes beyond it to include vestiges of history and traces the personalities of many current organizational participants” (p. 17). Tierney further asserts that identity “must be cultivated, tended, and frequently revised” (p. 18). These scholars’ perspectives on identity and its relation to culture produce a view of institutional identity as the shared understanding of an institution’s unique mission, history, and espoused values and beliefs.

As discussed earlier, an organization’s espoused values and beliefs differ from the organization’s deeply embedded values and beliefs, which give rise to the daily actions of institutional actors. Institutional identity as a reflection of an institution’s espoused values may therefore be inconsistent with the daily operations of an organization. Furthermore, institutional identity may not be representative of all members’ views of the organization due to the existence of subcultures. One implication is that an institution’s public or marketed image may be different from the experiences of campus constituents. Another implication is that an institution may have an identity that is not, in fact, shared or supported by all members of the organization. One example is when atheist faculty members take positions at religiously affiliated institutions in which the religious identity is highly enacted.

**Institutional Actors and Symbolic Interaction**

Thus far I have referred to individuals who are part of a college or university as “organizational members” and “institutional actors.” Institutional actors are central to understanding culture because culture “shapes and is shaped by the ongoing interactions of people on … campus” (Kuh & Whitt, 1997, p. iv; Swidler, 1986), and culture may either “constrain” or “enable” individual’s actions (DiMaggio, 1997, p. 271). Organizational leaders may seek to manage culture through the use of symbolic events and the development of structures to “transmit the core values of the institution” (Dill, 1982, p. 304). However, because organizational culture is “developed and sustained by identifiable actions of the community
members” (Dill, 1982, p. 304), all members of an organization have the potential to shape the culture. Recalling that culture is revealed through symbols and symbolic action, symbolic interactionism can help provide a theoretical basis for examining the relationship between institutional actors and an organization.

Herbert Blumer is the primary architect for the body of theory known as symbolic interactionism. One premise of symbolic interactionism is that individuals develop lines of action toward objects—which may be moral principles, religious doctrines, or people—based on the meaning that individuals attach to those objects (Blumer, 1986/1969). Individuals also form lines of action based on their “definition of the situation,” which results from individuals’ interpretation of their environment and then the subsequent “interaction between perception and action” (Helle, 2005, p. 53). Another premise of symbolic interactionism is that the meanings that human beings attach to various objects “is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows” (Blumer, 1986/1969, p. 2). For instance, administrators and faculty at many Historically Black Colleges and Universities have an attachment to the shared historical mission of providing access to higher education for African American students and, more generally, improving the lives of African Americans by shaping their educational philosophies, decision-making, and community engagement efforts.

Symbolic interactionist thought also provides a theoretical foundation for understanding collective action. As individuals communicate through gestures and symbolic action, they transmit information about their potential “respective contributions” toward a particular line of action (Shibutani, 1970, p. vi). In other words, when an individual interprets another individual’s actions as being in line with his or her own, that individual may identify a benefit to see collaborating with the other in pursuit of a particular agenda. When groups of individuals work together so that their lines of action converge and become “concerted,” “habitual” cooperation,
these groups form “social institutions” (Shibutani, 1970, p. vi).

**Symbolic Interactionism and Organizational Culture**

One implication of this line of thinking is that creation and maintenance of organizational culture and identity are deliberate actions, motivated by the meaning that institutional actors attach to culture and identity. Furthermore, the ways in which institutional actors interpret organizational culture and identity influence how those actors develop lines of action. In other words, the meaning that institutional actors attach to the organization’s culture or identity informs how actors reflect their interpretations of those symbols.

Culture is partially “reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it. It concerns decisions, actions, and communication both on an instrumental and a symbolic level” (Tierney, 1988, p. 3). Thus, according to Tierney, in examining organizational culture one must consider several factors, including its environment, mission, socialization, and leadership. Among other things, Tierney suggests that a researcher consider the following questions in studying an organization’s culture: “How does the organization define its environment?” “How is [mission] defined?” “How do new members become socialized?” Understanding how institutional actors define their environment can provide “rationales for change” (p. 32). Mission clarity can provide cohesion in organizational decision-making. Having some grasp over socialization processes can reveal how the culture is transmitted, which is critical for an organization that seeks to create a strong institutional identity and cohesive culture. In this study, asking these questions helps to reveal the various components of each niche institution’s culture and provides insight into the way that organizational culture shapes both an institution’s engagement with community as defined by institutional members, and its interaction in the broader culture.

Tierney (2008) also suggests when college and university leaders view the organizational
environment as enacted through the behaviors of institutional actors, they should look for internal contradictions, clarify the institutional identity, engage multi-pronged approaches to action, and communicate the organization’s identity. He asserts that a strong institutional identity, which must be cultivated among new members, “fosters cultural integration, and it directs organizational action” (p. 18). To some extent, strong identities provide the foundation for an institution to steer its own course when confronted with various options in the environment.

**Diverse Democracy**

To add to the theoretical perspective that an organization’s culture reflects values and practices of the host culture, this study will also employ theoretical concepts from political science that focus the study on the role that niche institutions play in a democratic society and the contributions they make to the effective practice of democracy. Broadly speaking, an effective democracy requires informed and active participation by citizens, and for this reason, democracy and citizenship are often considered “twin concepts” (Kivisto & Faist, 2007, p. 13). T.H. Marshall (1964) posited a tripartite view of citizenship that included civil, political, and social elements. The civil dimension includes all the “rights necessary for freedom” and “the right to defend and assert all one’s rights on terms of equality with the others and by due process of law” (p. 71). The political dimension involves the “right to participate in the exercise of political power,” while the social dimension ranges from “the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society” (pp. 71-72).

Inclusion and exclusion are both key elements of citizenship. In an inclusive democratic model, individuals who are afforded rights and duties by a state have formal citizenship (Kivisto & Faist, 2007). When those individuals can exercise their rights in ways that are equal with
others who are within the same political boundary, they have substantive citizenship. However, increasing inequality leads to an erosion of citizenship, which is further exacerbated by neoliberal economics. U.S. history is rife with examples of how groups of individuals have been excluded from substantive participation in the civil and political (and social) life of the nation based on race, gender, and religion. This study seeks, in part, to understand whether niche institutions, in serving specific populations, help to promote a more inclusive society and thereby strengthen democracy.

Whereas the state, within liberal democracies, once played a role in mitigating class inequalities while advocating equality of rights (the welfare state), in the U.S., the nation-state has become less involved in providing for social welfare and addressing inequalities, thereby not stemming the erosion of citizenship. For this reason, some scholars call for a reformulation of democracy that does not put the state at the center (Delanty, 2000; Kivisto & Faist, 2007). A more effective and reformulated democracy might focus on how groups and communities provide for social welfare and redress of inequalities.

**Debates in Democratic Theory About Group Difference**

A highly visible and unresolved debate within democratic theory is whether group difference (e.g., race, gender, and religion) and group membership within a diverse democracy serve as productive or fragmenting forces. On one hand, as argued by Michael Kenny (2004), theorists who prioritize the individual’s autonomy (traditional liberal political theorists) view the challenges posed by what has often been referred to as the politics of identity as antithetical and detrimental to the democratic project. One of their main concerns is that an individual’s membership in a group might infringe upon an individual’s autonomy and prevent him or her from living an authentic, self-authored existence. Within this line of thinking, citizenship in a democratic state that offers freedom, equality, and other rights to its members in exchange for
acceptance of the requirements of membership (e.g., obeying laws) is incompatible with group membership because an individual’s allegiance becomes split and cannot be entirely given to the state/society. Proponents of this argument claim that individuals should be citizens only and not group members because the state can meet the needs of all interest groups and cultural groups equally.

Other scholars, like Kenny, utilize a broader concept of liberalism that is “a historically evolutionary, culturally contingent, and internally diverse ‘family’ of partisan political ideas” (p. ix). Kenny also suggests that the traditional liberal philosophy is compatible with actions and behaviors of a group of individuals with common characteristics that aim to obtain some sort of social or political response from society or the state. Such actions and behaviors serve to highlight and value the differences among individuals within a society. Furthermore, recognition of how the liberal state has created and perpetuated inequalities for specific groups can bring the liberal state closer to its professed values of freedom, equality, and justice.

Having shared characteristics can motivate an individual to participate in a group or association and provide an avenue for engaging in public matters. The association, a singular representation of many individuals, can be considered a social or political actor similar to the way that a corporation is considered an individual and serves as the public voice for all associated individuals. Therefore, although the association is a layer between an individual and the public, an association provides a means for individuals to participate indirectly in the polity, particularly when they are unlikely to be heard as individuals. The mere existence of associations simultaneously provides a starting point for social movements. Ideally the outcome of social movements is one of several things: a compromise to balance the needs and interests of the association against those of other members of the state; the redress of any inequalities
experienced by a particular group; or the production of social and moral goods that benefit all members of society.

A major thrust of Kenny’s work is that actions and behaviors by a group can produce networks and relationships of trust that contribute to the coordination and cooperation of citizens for their mutual benefit, potentially binding citizens together rather than exacerbating cleavages. However, there is certainly potential to detract from or harm the state as can occur with the politics of resentment, which results from a group’s overinvestment in the oppressive aspect of its shared identity, and can threaten to block any productive capacity and potential that the group has. The politics of difference promotes a state and society in which citizens are encouraged to appreciate social and cultural differences. The politics of recognition requires that a group’s collective identity be validated and that the unique aspects of identity that constitute the group be preserved. The politics of recognition also requires that the state intervene on behalf of the group to remedy social ills that directly relate to the group’s identity. Through the politics of belonging or recognition, individuals who are members of fringe groups are represented in a heterogeneous public space, allowing for the voices of non-dominant groups to be heard. So long as the politics of belonging or recognition do not stray into the realm of the politics of resentment, they can effectively highlight the hypocrisies and failures of the liberal state, and perhaps motivate them to redress those inequalities.

Citizenship eroded by increasing inequality and exacerbated by neoliberal economics results in exclusion (Kivisto & Faist, 2007). Practically speaking, there are various ways that individuals can be excluded from full citizenship and subsequently experience forms of inequality. For instance, before the days of compulsory and public elementary education, individuals may have been denied the necessary education to exercise their civil or political rights (Marshall, 1964). In addition, because of the connection between higher levels of
education and more lucrative occupations, individuals who do not have access to higher
education may then suffer from class inequalities. In a nation made up of populations that are
diverse in terms of race, gender, religion, and various other characteristics, most citizens enjoy
formal citizenship; that is, they theoretically have the same rights as every other citizen (Delanty,
2000). However, the reality is that discrimination and other structural inequalities prevent certain
groups from enjoying the same level of participation in the social, economic, and political life of
this nation.

Recognition and Representation

Jodi Dean (1996) asserts that “as long as rights remain attached to persons, transforming
those rights will depend on the ability of groups to transform themselves from invisible to
visible, forgotten to remembered, denied to embraced” (p. 72). If Dean is correct, then the burden
of achieving substantive citizenship and equality rests with the individuals who are excluded.
Working toward recognition and representation of all groups within a society may help a nation
exercise more inclusion. Recognition is a concept that is cultural in nature, and the achievement
of recognition within the context of a diverse democracy leads to redress inequities and status
hierarchies that lead to some individuals being treated as inferior to others (Fraser, 2009).
Representation concerns issues of social belonging, inclusion or exclusion, and the extent to
which all citizens are permitted to participate fully in public discourses (Fraser, 2009).
Representation is achieved when previously underrepresented, unrepresented, or misrepresented
perspectives are included in public discourse.

Whether movement toward recognition and representation can lead to egalitarian
outcomes reflects what Stuart Hall describes as “the multicultural question” (Yuval-Davis,
Kannabiran, & Vieten, 2006, p. 6). Hall explains, “The multicultural question is whether it is
possible for groups of people from different cultural, religious, linguistic, historical backgrounds,
to occupy the same social space. … What are the terms on which they can live with one another without either one group [the less powerful group] having to become the imitative version of the dominant one” (p. 6). Multiculturalism, as described above, is a limited vision in that it suggests that peaceful co-existence of different groups is a sufficient end. Instead, within a diverse democracy, efforts to balance inclusion and exclusion while simultaneously preserving and valuing group differences are more likely to promote recognition and representation (Delanty, 2000; Fraser, 2009; Hooker, 2009).

**Communities of Difference**

William Tierney’s (1993) work on communities of difference provided an answer to the limitations of multiculturalism and identity politics as they are conventionally understood. His work offers several theoretical concepts that helped frame this study. First, individual and community experiences are historically grounded. Second, political action is necessary to address social structures that produce inequity. Tierney further asserted that an understanding of an individual’s identity reaches beyond a singular characteristic. For this reason, he suggests working toward solidarity and building community across differences. This idea is important because many communities or groups define themselves by an individual characteristic and if these communities or groups work toward recognition and representation, it is plausible that these groups would focus their efforts on their own groups for a variety of reasons.

Bringing the ideas of Jodi Dean and William Tierney together, more effective political activity to address oppressive structures would cross group boundaries. One community’s dedication of resources and services to another may result from a sense of social responsibility to other groups that feel marginalized or a shared sense of struggle. A group defined by race may work with another group defined by religion to form a coalition across racial and religious lines to bolster resources and strengthen their capacity to serve diverse populations. Robert Rhoads’
(1998) work on student activism, in illustrating how coalitions formed across racial, ethnic, and
gender lines, provides a broader and deeper perspective on multiculturalism in a diverse
democracy. Such engagement across group boundaries would lead to better solutions to
contemporary problems.

The focus of this study was three niche institutions that each primarily seek to educate
and serve one group. As alternative to a multiculturalism framework, this study will consider
how the populations at each institution have struggled for recognition and representation in U.S.
higher education or in the broader culture. This perspective underscores how niche institutions,
as defined in this study, are not limited to those institutions that serve marginalized populations,
but instead include each institution whose role in the system is to meet the needs of a specific
group and whose resources are influenced by perceptions of the institution’s relevance by
specific populations and interest groups, state and federal governments, and others who are in a
position to influence the allocation of resources. This framework directs this study to
understanding how niche institutions’ community engagement may benefit those outside the
historical niche constituency. The framework also suggests examination of other ways that niche
institutions benefit their historical niche constituencies in the broader fabric of American society
and the benefits that niche institutions create both within and outside the campus walls.

Whether these contributions and benefits constitute a “public good” (sometimes thought
of as public interest or common good) is unclear. In fact, the idea of a singular public good is
untenable. Critiques abound as to the theoretical utility in the concept of public good (sometimes
called public interest). For instance, as far back as 1957, Frank Sorauf argued that the concept
had become too influenced by notions of relativism, thereby resulting in too many and
sometimes conflicting definitions of public interest. However, he acknowledged that the “myth
of the public interest promotes at least temporary unity and provides a common ground for
agreement” (p. 638). He further notes that the public interest can be viewed as “a symbol for the attempt to recognize and consult interests that might be forgotten or overlooked in the pressure of political combat” (p. 639). Forty years later, Nancy Fraser (1990) echoes the difficulty in establishing one definition of common good. She notes that while liberal-individual theorists do not consider it possible to have a common good that transcends the sum of all individual goods, civic republicans believe that deliberation can result in a sense of collectivity that produces a common good that transcends the sum of individual goods. The lack of consensus about the theoretical utility of the concept of public good suggests that it is most useful for each institution’s membership to articulate the public good as a function of their contributions to the social, political, and economic advancement of groups.

Within the campus boundaries, niche institutions may foster inclusion by helping previously excluded groups gain entry to higher education, one of the most important rights afforded to citizens. For instance, historically Black colleges and women’s colleges were established to serve individuals who were previously excluded from higher education, and in doing so fostered inclusion for Blacks and women. As discussed in the literature review, many graduates of these institutions go on to hold leadership positions in society and play key roles in the social, political, and economic dimensions of American society. These institutions may effectively promote recognition and representation.

Outside the campus walls, some niche institutions may promote inclusion of marginalized groups in a diverse democracy if they perform the role of associations. One example is the partnering of a number of women’s colleges with the U.S. State Department to form the Women in Public Service Program, designed to increase the number of women in political leadership and public service. As noted earlier, associations, such as churches and neighborhood groups are formed by members who share a collective identity and common goals (Kenny, 2004). Because
an association can subsequently serve as the public voice for all associated individuals, in addition to promoting democratic participation of affiliated individuals, niche institutions may facilitate representation and promotion of the interests of the communities and populations they serve. If niche institutions are able to advance the interests of the groups and communities they represent, they may be contributing to a more inclusive American society.

Clearly, an important aspect of this study concerns how niche institutions define their communities and how they seek to advance those communities. Andrew Mason (2000) describes communities as “groups whose members share values and a way of life, identify with the group and its practices, and recognize each other as members” (pp. 40-41). Mason further argues that a “moralized” perspective of community views community members as having mutual concern for each other. In this study, niche institutions may be communities in and of themselves, but they may define their communities in ways that transcend the organization. The concept of community can reveal how individuals form their “allegiances” and help explain their “behavior” (Mason, p. 33).

**Integrated Framework**

A main focus of this study is whether niche institutions, in contributing to the public good as they define it, advance their historical niche communities. A second focus is whether those benefits extend to other communities or segments of society. In this study, the theoretical framework directs attention to the culture of niche institutions. An organization’s culture manifests explicitly in the institution’s architecture, symbols, and traditions and less explicitly in the institution’s embedded values. A cultural lens is helpful in understanding an institution’s identity, which reflects an institution’s espoused values, saga, and myths. This study’s cultural approach focuses on the internal aspects of culture to understand the institution’s identity and how institutional actors conceptualize the institution’s community. Identifying the many symbols
and aspects of an organization’s culture and understanding how institutional actors contribute to the development and maintenance of culture can provide an understanding of an institution’s identity and reveal how an institution defines its community. An organizational cultural lens will direct my analysis to identify cultural artifacts and processes that are involved in culture creation and management. This lens will also direct analysis to construct a narrative that describes the cohesive elements of an institution as well as any competing tensions and forces within the institution. Ideas about organizational culture also directed this study to consider external influences on the institution, particularly those that fit within an academic capitalist framework. Developing the historical and cultural narrative helped provide the foundation for articulating how each niche institution viewed its role in the American higher education enterprise, how each institution conceptualized community (historically and in the present day), and the extent to which each institution sought to advance its community.

Within each institution, individuals shape the institution’s culture and they are simultaneously influenced by it. Symbolic interactionism directs this study to understanding how institutional actors interpret symbols within the organization and how they contribute to the creation of the institution’s culture. Aspects of institutional culture—such as a historical mission of promoting inclusion of excluded groups and widely shared beliefs such as those related to religion—may shape individuals’ actions. Understanding the ways in which individuals interpret their environments and subsequently make decisions about their own actions may provide some insight into an institution’s culture. If individuals feel a sense of identification with the institution or the institution’s community, they may be more likely to engage in lines of action that perpetuate the organization’s mission or that advance the niche community. A symbolic interactionist lens directed data analysis to take into account the values that individual actors bring to their “work” within the institution (as learners, teachers, and administrators) and how
individual actors think about the institution’s mission. By focusing on developing an understanding of institutional actors’ values and ways of thinking, this study provided greater understanding of how institutional actors’ values, motivations, and interpretations of their environment reflected, or in some cases questioned, institutional identity and what institutional actors consider to be their contributions to the public good. Furthermore, focusing on how institutional actors’ values and ways of thinking gave rise to certain behaviors and decision-making helped with the analysis of how the work of institutional actors influence the institution’s capacity for advancing its community.

A niche institution’s historical community, as defined by the institution’s mission, is a critical part of the institution’s external environment. Broad conceptions of democracy and communities of difference provided a theoretical and analytical framework for understanding how niche institutions promote substantive citizenship or democratic participation of their historical communities. Examining niche institutions’ culture and engagement with communities revealed how they promoted inclusion, recognition, and representation and shed more light on the distinctive contributions these institutions make to U.S. higher education and a diverse democracy. Concepts from political science helped explain how institutions perform political roles in American society and promote greater inclusion as illustrated by increased participation of alumni in the social, economic, or political spheres of American society. Furthermore, findings identified the influences that each niche institution exerts on behalf of its multiple communities—historical, contemporary, and other—in the external environment thereby helping to meet the needs of a diverse democracy.
CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Part I: Descriptive Quantitative Analysis

To test whether there were statistically significant differences in opinion between students and faculty at Historically Black College and Universities (HBCUs) and their counterparts at other institutions, I performed t-tests as a straightforward approach to comparing group means (Agresti & Findlay, 1997). I then performed the same tests for women’s colleges and Council of Christian College and University (CCCU) member institutions. There were two null hypotheses: 1) the opinions of students at HBCUs, women’s colleges, and CCCU institutions were not significantly different from all other institutions and 2) the views of faculty at HBCUs, women’s colleges, and CCCU institutions were not significantly different from all other institutions.

Sample

My analysis utilized data from two national surveys administered to faculty and entering college students in 2004 by the Spirituality Project in Higher Education in conjunction with the Cooperative Institutional Research Program in UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute. I selected these data sets because they include a number of questions about respondents’ views on religion and spirituality, in addition to several questions about respondents’ views on race/ethnicity and gender that are asked almost annually. The survey administered to entering college students has often been called the College Student Beliefs and Values Survey. The survey administered to faculty is known simply as the Faculty Survey.

The Higher Education Research Institute administered the College Student Beliefs and Values Survey to 112,232 students at 236 institutions. In the same academic year, the Spirituality Project administered a faculty survey with many items that asked about faculty’s views on
Data Analysis

Using the institution’s ACE code, I identified all institutions in each data set. Then, based on lists from the Department of Education and the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), I identified all Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), women’s colleges, and evangelical Christian colleges affiliated with the CCCU in the sample. In the 2004 faculty sample, 36 out of 118 evangelical institutions that are members of the CCCU were represented, 11 out of 105 HBCUs were represented, and 21 out of 51 women’s colleges were represented. In the original 2004 student dataset, 36 out of 118 evangelical institutions affiliated with the CCCU were represented, 3 out of 105 HBCUs were represented, and 16 out of 51 women’s colleges were represented. Some institutions could be included in more than one niche; therefore, I created three dichotomous variables that identified whether each institution was an HBCU, women’s college, or evangelical Christian college. The small number of HBCUs resulted in an inability to make comparisons.

First, I calculated the means of faculty responses within each niche group on key items (see Appendix D for items used in the analysis). Items that reflected faculty perspectives on organizational culture and institutional identity ask respondents to indicate the importance of helping “students learn how to bring about change in American society” or providing “resources for faculty to engage in community-based teaching or research.” Items that reflect faculty perspectives on community engagement ask respondents to indicate their agreement with the statement “colleges have a responsibility to work with their surrounding communities to address local issues” or to indicate the importance of “[preparing] students for responsible citizenship” and “[instilling] in students a commitment to community service.”

I then calculated the means of student responses within each niche group on items that
reflect their perspectives on contemporary issues and community engagement (see Appendix D for items used in the analysis). Items that reflected student perspectives on contemporary issues ask respondents to indicate their level of agreement with statements such as “it is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships,” “racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America,” “affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished,” and “the activities of married women are best confined to the home and family.” Items that indicated the student perspectives on community engagement asked respondents to rate the importance of “influencing the political structure”, “influencing social values” and “participating in a community action program.”

After aggregating data for faculty and students, I performed t-tests to compare means of women’s colleges and CCCU institutions with other baccalaureate institutions (p < .05). Results of the t-tests were incorporated into the findings chapter for each case study. (Summary tables for the results can be found in the appendices. Due to the small number of student participants from HBCUs, there is no table comparing students at HCBUs and all other institutions.)

Limitations

One limitation of these data was that the faculty survey includes many items on faculty perspectives on organizational culture and community engagement, but very few on contemporary issues. In contrast, the student survey includes many items that ask about their views on contemporary issues and some on community engagement, but none about organizational culture. Additionally, the small representation of HBCUs prevented comparisons between students at HBCUs and other institutions.

Phase II: Multiple-Case Study

General Methodology

The current study utilized a multiple-case study approach (Yin, 2009) to examine how
three individual niche institutions advance the public good in ways that are related to their niche identities and missions. The key constructs in this study were 1) institutional identity exhibited through the organization’s culture, 2) community as defined by the niche institution, and 3) a generic notion of public good as defined by the institution. The main unit of analysis was the niche institution, but because institutions are collectives of individuals, the study was “embedded” in that it examined subgroups of institutional actors such as administrators, faculty, and students who influence and are influenced by the organization’s culture. I also examined a subunit in each organization that promotes community engagement. The data sources for this study were interviews, observations of any events that occurred during my site visit, and publicly available documents.

**Site Selection**

In identifying potential sites for this study, I identified institutions within each niche group with the goal of achieving what Robert Yin (2009) describes as replication logic. Yin explains that “unlike sampling logic used in survey research,” the goal of selecting cases for multiple-case study research is to produce similar results (literal replication) or “contrasting results for anticipatable [theoretical] reasons” (theoretical replication) (p. 55). Use of replication logic in qualitative research creates the potential for generalizability—what Yin refers to as external validity, but which many qualitative researchers such as Lincoln and Guba (1986) refer to as transferability.

In order to identify cases that might allow for either literal or theoretical replication, I conducted several queries in the National Center for Education Statistics’ College Navigator database. I gathered basic information about the institutions within each niche, including religious affiliation, undergraduate population, student-faculty ratio, and degrees awarded. I first eliminated all two-year institutions because I was interested in understanding how the
organizational culture influences students, and by including only four-year institutions, I expanded the possibility of interviewing students who had spent three or more years at the institution, resulting in a longer period of time that they could influence and be influenced by the institution.

Second, I eliminated institutions that had overlapping niches to preserve analytical clarity. These included HBCUs that served only women such as Spelman and Bennett College for Women. They also included any HBCUs and women’s colleges that had religious affiliations, such as Benedict College and Mount St. Mary’s College.

Third, I reviewed the mission statements of all remaining institutions and considered as potential sites institutions that 1) explicitly stated a contemporary commitment to the institution’s historical roots and mission, and 2) explicitly referred to a goal of engaging in some form of public service, leadership, or community building.

Finally, I looked across the remaining institutions to identify groups of schools that had similar undergraduate populations, student-faculty ratios, and awards/degrees offered. Case studies require “specific time boundaries to define the beginning and end of the case” (Yin, 2009, p. 32), therefore I also looked for institutions that were established around the same time to ensure that the institutions ultimately selected for study experienced similar historical events in American history. I prioritized private not-for-profit HBCUs over public HBCUs because all the remaining women’s and evangelical colleges were private not-for-profit. The institutions I selected were all private, not-for-profit, had a student-faculty ratio ranging from 9:1 to 12:1, had similar size undergraduate populations, and were established within 50 years of one another. Access to the three institutions that ultimately became the research sites for this study was partially contingent upon my agreement to mask the identity of each institution. I thus selected fictional names and refer to the HBCU as Racial Uplift University, the women’s college as
Women’s Equity College, and the member institution of the CCCU as Christian Kingdom College. The resemblance of any of these names to existing institutions is unintentional.

Data Collection

Publicly Available Records

To examine each niche institution’s identity, I reviewed institutions’ mission statements, considered how they changed over time, and asked the question: How does this institution frame its mission within the broader framework of American society? These records provided insight into how the institution understands its role in and contribution to the American higher education enterprise. These statements also helped provide insight into the way in which each niche institution defines its community. Such data provided some context for understanding each institution’s obligation to contribute to the public good. Different sources of data represented “multiple measures of the same phenomenon” and created the potential for “converging lines of inquiry” (Yin, 2009, pp. 115, 117).

To further understand institutional identity, I examined reports and press releases created by each institution’s marketing and communications office and asked the questions: How does the institution want to be viewed by the public? What institutional events and accomplishments does the institution’s media organization choose to highlight? Review of these documents also assisted with my sampling approach, which is described below. In addition, I reviewed each institution’s website for information about offices and programs that promote community engagement to develop a basic understanding of how each niche institution approached community engagement.

Sample

In the spring and fall of 2011, I visited three niche institutions and interviewed students, faculty, and administrators, using purposeful sampling as much as possible. (See Table 1 for the
breakdown of students, faculty, and administrators.) Purposeful sampling “focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). More specifically, I used purposeful, theoretical sampling—to include “people on the basis of their potential manifestation or representation of important theoretical constructs” (Patton, 2002, p. 238). Theoretical sampling led to the selection and inclusion of participants who could describe and explain how the organizational culture of each niche institution is managed, transmitted, and enacted. Furthermore, purposefully selected participants were more likely to reveal how each niche institution defines its niche community and advances that community within American society.

At each campus, I recruited and interviewed administrators whose position descriptions or titles suggested that they performed culture management roles. (See Appendix J for text of recruitment letters. See Appendix K for consent form.) These administrators helped manage culture within each niche institution by shaping the institution’s mission and pursuit of mission through academic and co-curricular program planning, development, and fundraising. They conveyed institutional priorities through media and communication and performed gatekeeping functions through admissions and hiring.

I identified faculty members who were either directly involved in advancing the niche institution’s community through research and service or indirectly through their work with students and other institutional actors. I relied on press releases, institutional newsletters, and documents created by the institution’s office for marketing and communications to identify faculty who were engaged in the community. I also used each institution’s website and electronic directory to identify faculty areas of expertise or interest that were relevant to the study.

After identifying the programs and offices that promote community engagement, at the women’s college and Christian college I recruited students who were involved in the program.
At the HBCU, which did not have one readily identifiable unit responsible for facilitating student engagement with community, I recruited students via one of the departments engaged in outreach efforts. I also directly contacted one student leader who made referrals to other students who were involved in community engagement and outreach efforts.

At Racial Uplift University, I interviewed six students, five faculty, and four staff/administrators for a total of 15 participants. At Women’s Equity College, I interviewed seven students, five faculty, and eight staff/administrators for a total of 20 participants. At Christian Kingdom College, I interviewed seven students, five faculty, and four staff/administrators for a total of 16 participants. The total number of participants in the study was 51.

Interviews sought to determine how institutional actors understood the institution’s identity as a specific aspect of the institution’s niche and organizational culture. I also used the interviews to understand how institutional actors conceptualize their communities and where the historical niche community fit into that understanding. I sought to understand how actors seek to advance the communities with which they feel affiliation and how the institutional culture influences actors’ community engagement. Finally, interviews helped me understand how institutional actors conceptualize a general vision of public good and how community engagement benefits individuals, community, and society writ large. (See Appendix L for the interview protocols.)

Interviews ranged from 30 to 60 minutes with administrators and from 60 to 90 minutes with faculty and students. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and coded. I completed contact summary sheets after each interview (see Appendix M), which facilitated reflection about my contact with every individual I encountered. Such reflection also helped me identify the main concepts, themes, issues, and questions that surfaced during each interview (Miles &
Huberman, 1994). These summary forms also facilitated the coding process and reorientation to the interview participant at later stages in the study, and assisted with data analysis (Miles & Huberman).

**Data Analysis**

Having a general analytic strategy in place before collecting data for a multiple-case study established priorities for data analysis (Yin, 2009). Data analysis was ongoing and preliminary data analysis began after completion of each interview. After each interview, I made summary notes of each conversation using a sample interview summary form as suggested by Huberman and Miles (1994). In it, I noted main issues and themes that emerged from the interview; information obtained for each section of the interview protocol; and observations that seemed salient, interesting, illuminating, or important. Summaries about each interview included preliminary notes relating to data analysis and emerging themes. New and remaining questions were noted and incorporated, as much as possible, into subsequent interviews.

My next step in analyzing each source of data was first-level coding using a provisional list of codes derived from the research questions, key constructs, and conceptual framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Throughout the coding process, I added codes as necessary. Employing a secondary level of coding, called pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994), I looked for relationships between codes to collapse codes or create “meta codes” which led to “parsimonious units of analysis” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69).

When data collection for each case was complete, I conducted within-case analysis to first identify descriptive findings that addressed “questions of what is going on and how things are proceeding” and then begin to formulate explanations and interpretations for what I observed (Huberman & Miles, 1998, p. 558). After I developed within-case findings, I conducted cross-case analysis, looking for “underlying similarities and systemic associations” (Huberman &
Miles, p. 562). As I engaged in pattern coding, I compared the emerging findings to previous research and developed interpretations while simultaneously considering “rival explanations” (Yin, 2009, p. 133).

**Trustworthiness and Authenticity**

In qualitative research, it is important to avoid “bias” on the part of the researcher (Yin, 2009, p. 72). The positivist social science research paradigm refers to this idea as objectivity. This study aspired to confirmability or neutrality of the inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). To account for my own position as a researcher, I worked with a group of critical colleagues who served as peer debriefers during the course of the study. Through in-person meetings and via email exchanges, I shared excerpts from the data along with my interpretations of those data. I asked this group to provide feedback on data analysis and whether interpretations were logical. This group also helped ensure that I identified and took into account outlier behavior, and that I considered alternative interpretations and explanations of the data.

Other issues for data analysis and role management concern the study’s rigor, which I framed in terms of Lincoln and Guba’s (1986) comprehensive body of writing on trustworthiness and authenticity. Whereas much of social science research highlights the importance of internal validity, external validity/generalizability, reliability, and objectivity, Lincoln and Guba assert that naturalistic inquiry should aspire to trustworthiness and authenticity. These researchers explain that trustworthiness comprises four characteristics: 1) credibility, or the “truth value” of the research; 2) transferability, or the applicability of the findings to other settings; 3) dependability, or the potential for researchers to consistently reach similar conclusions; and 4) confirmability, mentioned above. Authenticity in research necessitates fairness of inquiry and equal positions of power between the researcher and participants. In addition to obtaining informed consent from all interview participants, I conducted member checks, inviting all
interview participants to review and amend their interview transcripts. Furthermore, I invited a select group of participants at each institution to review and comment on preliminary drafts of the findings chapters. When applicable, I worked to correct any misinterpretations or acknowledge their disagreement with my conclusions.

**Role of the Researcher**

My personal history and experiences have resulted in a worldview and sense of vocation that have influenced me in my role as researcher. I have always felt called to the struggle for justice in this world, an aspiration that manifested itself in my childhood desire to prosecute Nazi war criminals and my fascination with the Civil Rights Movement in America. Thinking I had missed the opportunity to be part of a historical movement for social change, I stumbled around during my college years wondering what to do with my life. However, I was fortunate to attend a Jesuit Catholic university, where I began a journey in which I actively searched for meaning and purpose in my own life. After completing a bachelor’s degree in political science and a master’s degree in higher education administration, I left the Northeast to work at a Jesuit university in northern California. Over the twelve years I spent in Jesuit higher education, as a student and then administrator, I found inspiration in the missions of social justice that are central to Jesuit education. I learned vocabulary that helped me express ideals and values that I held close to my heart, and I watched how the individuals and the institutions affiliated with the Jesuit community fought for those who had no voice.

I spent several years helping victims of violence find their voice and working to reduce violence against women by educating individuals within the university community. I tried to help create dialogues for individuals in Catholic universities on how to best serve lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities in the spirit of the values espoused in Catholic social teaching. Shortly before returning to graduate school, an experience that further illuminated my
my visit to the University of Central America (UCA) in San Salvador, a Jesuit Catholic institution, where I learned about the martyrdom of Bishop Oscar Romero, four American churchwomen, and six Salvadoran Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter. Each of these individuals, all associated with the Catholic Church, sought to work with the poor and disenfranchised populations of El Salvador whom the rich and powerful landowners were cheating and starving. The priests, inspired by Catholic social teaching and liberation theology, taught at the UCA and used their positions in academia to speak out against the corruption and abuses they saw and to advance social justice. One night during my visit, I participated in the annual candlelight march through the UCA to honor the memory of those who had died fighting for the underprivileged and disenfranchised. I saw how individuals and universities could seek solidarity with those less fortunate and use their power and privilege to fight oppression.

During my eight years as an administrator, I educated students about the discrimination related to gender, race, or sexuality, which prevents individuals from attaining full citizenship. I came to believe that the right to contribute to public dialogue is a foundation of citizenship and, in a democratic society, the intersections of race, class, gender, and religion should be celebrated for the contributions that diverse individuals make to public dialogue. A citizen in a democratic society not only has the right to criticize the current state of affairs and the social and historical processes by which such status was achieved, but she has a responsibility to do so. As an educator and administrator, I helped students learn to recognize marginalization and become engaged in direct action to address it. I became convinced that colleges and universities could prepare individuals to fight for and work on behalf of those who had no voice while at the same time be prepared for a life of civic engagement. I have come to value education as a means for effecting social change, and I credit my experience in Jesuit higher education for shaping my values, worldview, and career trajectory; I bring this perspective and experiences to my research.
Limitations

There were some limitations to this research design. First, I did not engage in sustained, in-depth observations at each niche institution due to time and resource limitations. Observations that could be collected without direct engagement with institutional actors provide another source of data for understanding the organizational culture at each institution. Whereas institutional actors can thoughtfully craft an institution’s media and publications, and interview participants can shape their responses to a researcher’s questions, individuals observed by a researcher over time may behave in less guarded and more authentic ways that can reveal more about an organization’s culture. At each campus I had limited opportunity to conduct informal interviews and observe events during site visits. Second, I was an outsider to each organization, so I relied heavily on the perspectives of institutional actors. However, interviewing multiple members of different campus groups provided different perspectives on the same phenomenon. Also, as previously discussed, I conducted member checks to mitigate misperceptions about the institutions and engaged in peer debriefing with a group of critical peers.
CHAPTER FIVE

A CASE STUDY OF RACIAL UPLIFT UNIVERSITY

This study was primarily concerned with the role of niche institutions among U.S. colleges and universities. Institutional diversity has been considered a major strength of the higher education enterprise for its capacity to educate a large volume of students, create an educated citizenry, and meet a variety of student and employer needs. This study examined the extent to which each college or university advanced the interests of the population that the institution historically and primarily served, and the extent to which the organizational culture reflected, supported, and challenged the institution’s mission.

Racial Uplift University (RUU) is one of 105 remaining Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the nation. Its institutional identity is grounded in a history tied closely to the Reconstruction of the South in which Blacks and Whites co-existed in separate public spheres. Public resources and facilities for African Americans were poor in comparison to those for Whites. The founder of Racial Uplift University, in response to these disparities, sought to improve the lives of former slaves. His conviction that education could facilitate betterment of the lives of former slaves translated into his life’s work of developing an institution that would create access to education for freed slaves and provide them with an avenue for social mobility. Key to the institution’s mission is imparting to students an understanding of African-American history so that students would gain knowledge of the factors that created the climate in which African Americans live today. From its very genesis, Racial Uplift University has served two constituencies: the institution’s African-American students and the African Americans in the surrounding community. A case study of Racial Uplift University revealed how continual success in achieving the institution’s dual educational and outreach missions contributes to the realization of a diverse democracy by promoting substantive participation in the social,
economic, and political realms of the U.S.

This chapter explores the current state of an institution that has the unique value proposition of meeting the needs of a broad audience of African Americans. It begins with a historical and cultural narrative of Racial Uplift University and how the history itself is an asset. The first of the sections to follow briefly describes common criticisms of the institution. The second section explains how the mission is distinctive and is critical for African Americans today. The section also describes how students have little grasp of the history and mission, which works against effective enactment of the mission. The third section describes the institution’s present-day community outreach efforts and the surprising lack of formal opportunities for student involvement. The fourth section describes the contemporary challenges that the institution faces in carrying out its mission.

The Historical and Cultural Narrative of RUU

Racial Uplift University is a four-year, private, nonprofit university located in a rural area in the deep South. There are close to 3,000 mostly traditional-age undergraduate students and several hundred graduate students enrolled at the university. The institution is a doctoral-granting institution and awards degrees in a multitude of programs. Unlike some other Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Racial Uplift University has maintained its predominantly Black student population. As reported by the U.S. Department of Education, 87 percent of the university’s students are Black, 12 percent are unknown, and one percent are nonresident. Nearly 65 percent of the faculty are African American or Black. Whites, Asians, and nonresident alien faculty each are represented by 5 percent of the faculty for a total of 15 percent, according to College Factual, a company that analyzes and summarizes data from the Department of Education (n.d.). By the same analysis, less than half a percent of the faculty are Latino. Racial composition for the remainder of faculty is unknown. Although racial diversity is limited,
members of the campus community argue that there is great diversity in terms of other characteristics, including geographic home and socioeconomic status.

By many participants’ accounts, the largest percentages of students who are not African American are enrolled in veterinary medicine, engineering, biology, and occupational therapy. Additionally, eighty to ninety percent of applicants receive financial aid, according to a senior administrator. This statistic is not surprising at an institution where the annual cost of tuition, room, and board is approximately $32,000. Many students will accumulate substantial debt on their way to graduation; thus, according to the same senior administrator, social mobility becomes a necessity. An associate professor made a related observation that if a student does not use the time productively, it is a wasted investment. She and other faculty expressed a feeling of responsibility to teaching, mentoring, and advising their students in such a way that facilitates academic achievement and prepares students for the global marketplace. Implicit in the sentiment is the commitment to helping their students graduate and doing so in a timely fashion.

Racial Uplift University was first founded as a public normal school for former slaves. As it became clear that the institution needed additional funds to support its basic mission of educating teachers, the leadership worked successfully with the state legislature to change the institution’s status. When the institution became a private, nonprofit institution, institutional leaders were able to pursue financial support from private donors.

The earliest students helped create the school’s foundation and infrastructure, and given the historical time period in which the school was established, the feat likely seemed impossible to most African Americans at that time. An accomplishment of that magnitude sowed a number of seeds into the institution’s culture: students’ confidence that they were capable of learning the skills and concepts to build things from the ground up, a sense of ownership and pride in the institution, and a sense of agency in creating a physical and symbolic structure intended for racial
uplift. According to a professor in architecture, the institution has high capacity for evoking a sense of place. He explained that theory of place suggests that people “establish a sense of identity relating to that particular place, or a sense of actual attachment to that environment because it has certain distinctive qualities that make it unique as a built environment.” The monuments scattered throughout campus, combined with many of the oldest campus edifices created by students, evoke a sense of place and reinforce a campus ethos of persistence and resilience that is indicative of the institution’s identity.

The contemporary culture builds on this legacy. Faculty and students agree that most students graduate feeling that they can do anything when they leave. One female student explained that graduates are strong-minded women or gentlemen who are oriented toward bettering the world without destroying the old; these people are confident and prepared for life. Other students supported that view, explaining that if you can succeed at this institution, you can succeed anywhere. A fourth-year engineering student theorized that students who believe that the university has taken a chance on them might be more motivated to succeed, and those who do develop more self-confidence.

The nearly all-Black student population helps to create an environment that facilitates a variety of important noncognitive outcomes, including a sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and confidence. Students also feel a “sense of purpose, determination, and sense that they can make a significant contribution to the society,” according to one administrator. These characteristics may provide the necessary psychological support that helps graduates to excel academically within the university and become prepared for graduate studies or careers after college. Additionally, undergraduates frequently receive training in basic research principles, providing them with a strong foundation for many fields of graduate study. According to the director of the continuing education department, the institution has produced the largest number of African-American
veterinarians and Ph.D.s in material sciences. Another senior administrator noted, “For the size of the university, historically, its contributions, from my judgment, in terms of resource development [have] been disproportionate to its size and even place.” Racial Uplift University is among the elite Black institutions whose graduates comprise a disproportionate number of the African-American students who earn advanced degrees, particularly in the sciences.

Racial Uplift University never focused solely on a traditional on-campus education. The founder’s vision was for institutional actors to go into the surrounding communities to educate African Americans who could not get to campus. These educational programs were practical in nature and were intended to help poor Black families of the South improve their ability to feed themselves. The model was successful, in part, because the college’s founder insisted on free education for community members. In addition, college faculty developed techniques and technologies that could be replicated and utilized in the poorest communities. The work that produced many agricultural and technological innovations was driven not by interest in patents or revenue generation, but by an intellectual curiosity and willingness to serve others through technological developments. An innovative spirit continues through the present day as illustrated by the many patents that come out of the university. An interest in using scholarship to benefit the community was also currently present and was reflected in HBCU faculty’s higher levels of agreement (compared to faculty at other institutions in the sample) that they should use their scholarship to address community needs, that colleges should be involved in solving social problems, and that colleges have a responsibility to work with their surrounding communities to address local issues. (See Appendix E for the results of all t-tests.)

Those who are familiar with the institution’s historical mission take great pride in it, and they enact the mission through their academic and professional endeavors. Many students engage in student-run community service work, and faculty and administrators oversee a variety of large
community outreach and education projects that serve the twelve counties in the so-called southern Black Belt region, which includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Organizationally, there are two large centers of cooperative extension and continuing education, along with a multitude of other centers focused on community needs, a variety of research projects based in academic departments, and some small projects and programs unaffiliated with any center or academic department.

The location of the institution exerts some influence on the mission and how it is enacted. The institution is located in a poor community, and the surrounding Black Belt region is marked by abject poverty. Nearly one in five residents live in poverty, according to the University of Georgia’s Initiative on Poverty and the Economy (n.d.). Research has shown that African Americans experience poverty at a rate that is 10 percentage points higher than the national population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013), but that across the southern Black Belt, African Americans make up 36 percent of the poverty population, while Whites make up 52 percent and Hispanics make up 21.5 percent (University of Georgia, n.d.). It can be argued that it is impossible to miss the poverty in the region, and it can be similarly argued that those in positions to alleviate it willfully ignore the poverty. A director for one of the many community outreach projects shared her observation about the poor, rural South, more broadly speaking:

It's a system that perpetuates poverty. If you’re poor, you can’t get out of being poor because you’re living in a place that’s poor. You’re living in a place that doesn’t have any resources. How are they going to provide education? Who’s going to come and work there to teach school to get paid nothing and no place to live — nothing? So those children continue to be poor. They continue to have nothing. If you don’t see that part of Alabama, if you don’t see that part of the [rural] South, then you really haven’t seen the
In her comments above, this staff member identified the difficulty in facilitating systemic change that can interrupt the cycle of poverty. She provided an example of how existing tax structures perpetuate poverty. For instance, if a particular industry pays low business taxes, there is little revenue for education and other services. If that industry makes up 75 percent of the economic base of a county, the revenue stream is miniscule. Compounded by low property taxes, there are few public monies to fund much-needed services. In this way, the economic structures in the region perpetuate poverty, and the barrier to change has a social and political aspect to it. From the perspective of this staff member, this example illustrates how the Deep South is notorious for producing a culture in which racial minorities and poor people, who are often the same populations, struggle to obtain resources for their needs.

Members of the institution work tirelessly to end poverty, with short-term focus on helping individuals and families address immediate concerns and longer-term focus on dismantling the societal structures that perpetuate it. Faculty and staff are motivated, in part, by the question posed by an administrator, “Who else is looking out for Black families in the South?” The combination of direct service and advocacy in the service of African Americans is a distinctive characteristic of Racial Uplift University. The institution is a center for educating community members and students about the structures of disenfranchisement with the goal of facilitating their development of a sense of agency to effect social change.

The nature of RUU’s relationships with the surrounding communities has fluctuated throughout the decades. In the earliest days, the institution and the community were basically the same; there was little differentiation. Upon its opening, the school had no more than 30 students from the community. According to a former provost, the founder’s vision was about African-American community members’ “self-sustainment and being able to build your own, grow your
own, do your own, and survive and be educated at the same time.” She further explained that the
dfounder felt strongly about bringing the community into the institution so that the people in the
depressed area would “see enlightenment, now see Black people being educated, now see
professional people.” Exposing the community to the learning that was occurring on campus and
finding ways to benefit the community helped to advance the founder’s vision of racial uplift for
African Americans via education. Unfortunately, the economic development of the institution
and that of the community have not kept pace with each other. As farming was increasingly
mechanized, the basis of the local and regional economy became shaky because there was a
decreased need for human resources and no new jobs opened up to replace the ones that
disappeared. The stagnant economic growth in the local community has resulted in few jobs for
graduates of the college. The result is a missed opportunity for the university and town to
mutually benefit each other.

Students described their sense that people who live in town put students from the college
up on a pedestal. One senior female student leader asserted that the institution’s students are the
most important people in the community, in part because students are the hope of their African-
American ancestors and the local community. The institution has become more prominent than
the small city in which it is located, and perhaps this development explains this student’s
perception that students “run” the town. These common perceptions, though not uniformly held,
contribute to a psychological division between campus and community, but also help explain
why students graduate with confidence and the sense that they can do anything.

The initial effort to bridge the community and institution was very successful. Over the
institution’s history, local members of the community, regardless of whether they had family
members enrolled at the institution, attended graduation annually. The inclusive event was a
celebration of the university and local community, and also for the continued progress and
success for African Americans in general. One graduating female student asserted that in order for the university to keep its history rich, it must stay in touch with the community, whose members are likely to know more about the area and institution than the ever-changing student body knows.

The relationship between town and gown was not always so sunny. Members of the campus community suggested that the institution’s leadership, in the recent past, had created a divide between the institution and the local community. One senior faculty member noted that under “the prior administration, there was not a lot of community and university interaction. But with this new administration, I think that tide is changing.” During that time, the institution also constructed a gate around the campus, which had never before physically marked the boundary between town and gown. The impetus for the gate was the murder of some students by members of the local community. Some members of campus felt that building the gate signaled the message that the institution is separate and distinct from the town, eliciting some negative feelings toward the institution.

The current leadership seems to be taking a different approach to community relations. A faculty member and administrator, capturing the perception of many faculty, staff, and students, noted that the new president has “come to build this city as opposed to this university.” This statement implies that leaders in preceding years were focused solely on the institution, a notable shift from the historical mission. In this way, the current leadership is re-engaging the local community in a manner consistent with the spirit of the institution when it first opened.

Throughout its history, Racial Uplift University responded to the needs of the post-Civil War South, initially educating freed slaves who could then teach other African Americans. It also sought to help African Americans learn additional skills to support themselves and better their lives. The historical conditions required that the institution comprise only African-American
students, and racial homogeneity of the student body has persisted over the years. A discussion of why this institution continues to have a predominantly African-American student body is outside the realm of this case study. However, the criticisms that are associated with the homogeneous racial demographic of the institution offer important context for understanding the way in which members of Racial Uplift University enact the institutional mission of education and outreach. The next section briefly describes some of those criticisms.

**Criticisms of a Predominantly Black Student Body**

For some students, the nearly all-Black environment mirrors the racial demographics of the environments they experienced before college, while for others the environment is far more homogeneous. The only faculty member who was not African American in this study noted that the Black students who grew up in predominantly Black environments and enroll at RUU may not leave that “comfort zone.” Acknowledging that his perspective is that of a White person, he went on to express his opinion that “part of the college education should be removing those kinds of limitations. In the end, a student should, if anything, leave college feeling more comfortable moving freely through all dimensions of our society, all aspect of our society, rather than getting even more hemmed in.” This professor communicated his perception that people who are unfamiliar with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) believe that HBCUs perpetuate a system of segregation nearly 150 years after the abolishment of slavery. It was unclear whether he shared this perception himself prior to arriving at the institution or while teaching at RUU.

Another criticism of Racial Uplift University is that it admits all students regardless of academic preparedness or potential. According to the director of one of the campus centers, critics argue that Racial Uplift University administrators accept students whom they know will not succeed, and the college therefore does a disservice to them by accepting their tuition dollars
and burdening them with debt that they will never be able to repay. One administrator with
teaching responsibilities offered a more nuanced perspective, first noting that many
Predominantly White Institutions will not admit African-American students whom they believe
will fail based on students’ standardized academic indicators. He also noted that institutions will
“leave those who have the greatest challenges to the Racial Uplift Universities of the world …
but then our faculty and our productivity is judged by the same criteria.” He further explained
that Racial Uplift University is diligent in focusing its efforts to identify which students can
succeed, not which students will fail, which is itself a major point of distinction. At Racial Uplift
University, faculty seem uniform in their belief and acceptance of the significant amounts of
time required of them to help underprepared students be successful. Their willingness to dedicate
their time leads to another potentially unfounded criticism: that the institution’s faculty members
are less productive than faculty at other institutions.

Although not directly in response to these criticisms, faculty and staff regularly offered
comments that indicated a shared belief that criticisms of the institution, and of all Historically
Black Colleges and Universities in general, often mask racist motivations. One faculty member
noted, “That’s the goal of some segments of the population: to make these institutions irrelevant
because they really don’t want factions to grow to any degree that can oppose the majority.” This
perspective helps explain the concern of faculty and administrators who perceive that African
Americans’ various forms of mobility are actively restricted by dominant groups and power
structures. The perspective also helps to explain faculty and administrators’ passion and
motivation for educating and reaching out to African-American populations across the southern
Black Belt.

Racial Uplift University is emblematic of many of the HBCUs in that its value
proposition goes beyond serving the institution’s mostly African-American students. The
institution also serves African Americans in the immediate local community, region, and perhaps the entire U.S. Of mild concern is that if HBCUs are deemed irrelevant and future presidential executive orders do not reaffirm commitment to these institutions, there will be a precedent for ending support of other minority-serving institutions. Executive orders are a critical cornerstone of public support for HBCUs in both symbolism and financial support. In this way, the fate of other minority-serving institutions may be bound up with the future of HBCUs.

The various criticisms that pertain to HBCUs do not take into account the unique and distinctive contributions made to U.S. society. The burden of communicating the institution’s distinctiveness rests with institutional actors: current faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

Mission Distinctiveness and Disconnection

The historical mission of educating African Americans who were previously excluded from other institutions of higher learning endures today. The contemporary context is important for understanding the significance of this institution’s contribution to the public good. Only 47 percent of Black males graduate from high school (Holzman, 2010). One faculty member at this institution asserted that across the South, the high school graduation rate of Black males is abominable, with some high schools that have large numbers of Black males completing a full academic year without the graduation of any Black males. Other faculty participants shared similar perceptions, asserting that it is difficult for low-income Black males to get through the secondary school system. Faculty and administrators are attuned to the added difficulties that many low-income Black males who were educated within unequal secondary school systems are likely to encounter if they make it to college. The higher education sphere is one of the few sites where the dire condition of Black males in the U.S. gets attention, and that this university is one of the limited number of colleges that are intensely focused on the education and success of this population is a critical contribution to the public good and to the prospects for a democratic
nation that purports to value diversity.

A faculty member in the biology department described another contemporary context related to the current student population. She explained that students in this millennial generation have not received the sufficient training, background, and academic skill set that they need to succeed in college. During a time when she was serving in an administrative capacity, this faculty member worked with others around campus to develop various initiatives to improve student learning. Given the educational disparities that occur by race, the academic under-preparedness of incoming students has likely been an issue throughout the institution’s existence. Nearly all faculty members indicated that they and other members of the institution continually rise to the challenge of bringing students to the level where they need to be and then beyond.

Faculty and staff recognize that one of the institution’s most important contributions to the public is the preparation of African-American students whose only opportunity for higher education may be at this college. A director of one of the campus centers explained the generally shared philosophy that his work and that of his colleagues is about “taking young people where they are and giving them the opportunity to go where they want to go.” He further expounded that students’ potential is not what they have when they arrive at the institution, it is what they have when they leave. Helping students recognize what they are capable of doing suggests that for some students, the college experience transforms how they see themselves and their role in the world.

The distinction of providing higher education to a population once excluded and still underserved is a characteristic shared with other Historically Black Colleges and Universities. A senior administrator described what he characterized as the institution’s contribution to the public good as:

taking these young people and subjecting them to an educational process characterized by
sufficient rigor and expansiveness that they are really high-quality professionals whose humanity has been taught in the positive by being here. And that’s a unique contribution if we are taking people who otherwise could not become a chemist, … DVMs [doctors of veterinary medicines], MDs, economists and them to such and if they’re truly competitive; if they’re less so, no [there is not the same contribution]. But if they also happen to value — respect — the Black Belt, then in my judgment, as a societal outcome, that is a unique niche. So that’s the agenda of the university. The last piece is crucial because even if we were able to mimic MIT or some place like that in terms of just producing high-quality people, but high-quality people with significant character deficiencies—or even if they didn’t have deficiencies, they just simply didn’t care about anything other than their career and whatever — then they have no capacity to really return anything to the society.

This administrative leader went on to stress his belief that it is critical that faculty and staff understand the institution’s mission and carry it out with urgency. His comments suggest a moral imperative to continue the process of changing society by producing graduates with the skills, knowledge, and desire to create a more equitable world.

Before arriving at the institution, many members of the campus community bring some familiarity with the institution’s history because, as noted by the senior administrator cited above, it is nearly impossible to grow up in the South without learning about the “heroic efforts” of some previous college leaders. Many faculty and staff either grew up during the Civil Rights era or their parents did, and they have a stake in remedying racial inequities. The lived experience of being a person of color who experiences disparities and other inequities may motivate many campus members to educate others and help them improve their lives. National data support this finding; faculty at many HBCUs, when compared to faculty at all other
institutions in the data set, indicated higher levels of importance of enhancing students’
knowledge of and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups.

Although the educational attainment of Black males has been given much attention
nationally and at RUU, the educational opportunities and achievement for females was important
to many institutional actors who recognized the need to address such concerns. In this way, race-
based personal experiences were not the only motivating factor for RUU members to work
toward equity or social justice, although they seemed to be the most salient. Personal
characteristics, such as gender, have driven some of the work of the women on campus. A
faculty member who had previously served as one of the most senior leaders in the institution
explained that her interest in women’s issues surfaced from her experience in the sciences in a
specialty that was male-dominated. She found the situation to be problematic and determined
that women needed to have a voice, and she established a women’s conference through which
women might seek enlightenment and empowerment. What she was explaining was that with all
the accomplishments and contributions that women make to the public, they have no visibility,
and as a result, young girls do not have role models who can help them imagine their futures.

Many faculty and staff became much better versed in the mission and its present-day
application during their time at the university, either as former students or as employees.
Program review, planning processes, and grant-writing activities often require faculty and staff to
articulate connection of their work to the mission. Institutional structures, such as the
aforementioned, along with student orientation and the physical environment, make it difficult
for most members of the campus to be unaware of the history or mission of the university.
Faculty and administrators understand both the history and mission, which together frequently
attract the institution’s many dedicated employees.

Many faculty and administrators are also African American, and most have experienced
firsthand racially based challenges to their own education and advancement. These personal experiences may motivate their interest in understanding the history and mission of the university, and according to one associate professor in food and nutritional sciences, the experiences help them “better understand students’ sociological, psychological, and economic base, because you’re talking about minority individuals who have risen above. So they’re better able to understand the student perspective and better able to cater to their needs.” They have also learned from their personal experiences that in racially biased workplaces and other public spaces, many African Americans will have to prove themselves. As one faculty member put it, “For you to survive, you have to be ten times better. You cannot be mediocre.” She, like other faculty and staff, hold a strong conviction that the institution plays a crucial role in addressing racial inequity. An associate professor noted that if Historically Black Colleges and Universities disappear, “We’ll be going back on many decades. We’ll be taking thousands, millions, of steps backward.” The work of faculty and administrators at Racial Uplift University is critical. She also explained that for these students, “Here, the system is making sure the system is not against you.” Her and others’ investment in the mission stems from an appreciation that the university, as an HBCU, is uniquely positioned to serve minority populations in ways that Predominantly White Institutions cannot, will not, or do not.

Conversations with faculty and staff suggested that the generational divide might help explain why students seem less interested and aware of the institution’s historical mission. As noted by a variety of institutional actors, students see some level of affluence among African Americans, particularly those in professional sports and entertainment industries. The students who lack awareness may not feel pressed to further the social, economic, or political mobility of African Americans in the U.S. They may feel that the nation is making adequate progress on the long arc toward racial equity.
Students’ reasons for enrolling at the institution include family legacy, eligibility for certain scholarships for attending an HBCU, availability of major, academic prestige, and job placement rates. There is an expectation that students will learn the history and mission through the curriculum. Some of them directly encounter the institution’s history in their majors, as architecture students do in helping to preserve and repair the buildings. One professor in food and nutritional sciences asserted that each university program has a tie to the institution’s history, whether to the original education programs or to educational training of past presidents, and that alone should provide a connection for students to the historical mission. However, some schools and academic programs, such as those in agriculture, food and nutritional sciences, and architecture, seem to have a much stronger tie to the institution’s historical mission. Programs in information systems and business are newer and have a weaker tie to the mission. Mandatory courses in certain schools may also weave the institution’s history and mission into the course material. The variation in the way academic programs tie in instruction about the institution’s history and mission may partially explain why some students have a stronger understanding of the mission than others.

Regardless of program of study, students take a mandatory full-year orientation class in which they read seminal texts in African-American history and education in the aftermath of slavery, and thereby learn about the institution’s legacy. A former orientation leader explained that when she went through orientation as a freshman, she was bored because the historical mission and legacy were not properly presented to students. Referring to herself as a “professional” in terms of her level of knowledge of the institution’s history and legacy, she credits her work as an orientation leader as the reason for her mastery of the institution’s history.

Despite institutional-level efforts, students may still graduate without an understanding or appreciation of the historical mission. Some faculty and administrators feel that history is not
important to many students and that their frame of reference is the last ten years. One associate professor in food and nutritional sciences stated, “They don’t want to know where they came from or where they want to go.” Many faculty and administrators think that students have an inadequate understanding of and appreciation for the legacy. A senior administrative leader frustrated with this state of affairs noted wryly, “They are most assuredly not [aware of the institution’s distinctive history and mission], and I think that is not a positive.” He explained that students have a “conditional disdainment” of the institution’s history despite being “perpetually confronted with the symbols, the iconic structures.” Those institutional leaders who find it surprising and frustrating that some students leave without an understanding or connection to the mission will look for ways to address this issue.

It seems debatable whether students must graduate with an understanding of mission in order to contribute effectively to the progress of African Americans after college. One could argue that students can get the knowledge, skills, and orientation to community that the university seeks to impart without developing an understanding of the mission. However, a department head asserted that students should know the mission of the university because “that’s a part of helping them become who they are.” Her comment points to the opinion of many faculty and staff that an understanding of the mission is critical for students to know their roots as a population, to develop an understanding of the social and historical forces that structure the inequalities in their everyday lives, and to develop the disposition to help African-American communities and others that are historically disadvantaged due to race or ethnicity.

One student provided an example of how a student might graduate without realizing that he or she has internalized the institution’s mission by developing a disposition to improve the lives of African Americans and other marginalized communities. She explained that the college’s mission is to bring together African Americans from a variety of backgrounds who will become
“one family and one people, so when they leave, everybody has the whole community in mind.”

If the mission is not instilled in some manner or form in the students who graduate from the institution, there is likely to be some loss to the institution’s potential and capacity for multiplying the institution’s ameliorating effect on the African Americans locally and nationally.

To summarize this section, the primary community served by the institution is the university’s predominantly Black student body. Since the abolition of slavery, African Americans, as a population, have gained social mobility, obtained political rights, and increased political representation; however, levels of attainment are far below those of other racial groups in the U.S. Additionally, African-American communities continue to suffer from poverty and health disparities, consequences of the nation’s failings in its post-Civil War public policy efforts. Existing political structures make it difficult for marginalized populations with limited voice to affect public policy whether for provision of education or change in tax laws. Thus, although the needs of African-American communities are different today compared to when the institution first opened, the still-relevant institutional mission has proven adaptable to contemporary contexts and continues to serve as a point of distinctiveness for the university.

This section described how a key aspect of RUU’s mission is to educate the university students about African-American history in order for them to understand the structures that affect their lives and the climate in which they live. If we are to take seriously the comments from faculty and staff, there seems to be a decrease in students’ historical literacy along with a decreasing recognition and appreciation for the role that the institution has played in improving the lives of African Americans. If the trend continues, graduates of the institution will obtain an increasingly shallow knowledge of the institution’s historical mission. For some faculty and institution leaders, this shift is problematic because they feel that an understanding and appreciation of the mission is critical in motivating graduates’ willingness to confront the
problematic structures that limit African Americans’ attainment of social, economic, and political progress. Progress in these domains is largely dependent on the coordinated and concerted efforts of concerned citizens, including the faculty, staff, and administrators at Racial Uplift University. The next section details the efforts of these individuals, then describes the limited opportunities that are available to students, and finally offers some insight into why students may not recognize the present-day vitality of the mission.

**Community Engagement and Outreach in the Black Belt**

Of equal priority to educating Racial Uplift University students is the service to the communities in the Alabama portion of the southern Black Belt, especially those communities in closer proximity to the university, via outreach and action research. Leveraging the educational enterprise of RUU to contribute to the improvement of local and regional communities is inarguably one of the distinctive characteristics of the university. The institutional identity is grounded in its history and commitment to community engagement, helping communities find solutions to problems, and facilitating capacity building. Without fail, faculty and administrators identified their commitment to addressing the inequities and injustices experienced by African Americans in the Black Belt and across the nation to some degree. As a result, when local community members are in need and seek help from the university, whether through university-operated organizations off campus, former faculty and staff, or current employees, those individuals oblige. The director of one of the campus outreach programs suggested that faculty and staff find ways to help those individuals in need, reflecting, “I think everybody here has, I guess, a missionary heart.” The institution’s mission is therefore enacted on a daily, one-to-one basis.

The student culture supports high levels of community engagement. Positive reactions from peers reinforce students’ active engagement in their communities. One female student
leader explained her belief that it is human nature to want to be popular, and students who want to be popular are active in student activities and in community engagement efforts. She noted, “I swear, Racial Uplift University has the weirdest sense of cool ever, which is crazy, but it’s good. Yeah, serving the community is cool. We went to clean the community one day. And if you weren’t there, you just weren’t cool. … Everybody was there. The people who are most popular and most prominent here are the hardest-working.” Students provide a great deal of tutoring to local schools and communities, and in promoting education, that form of community engagement is consistent with the institution’s history.

Students find engagement opportunities largely through student-run organizations, including some of the Greek organizations and honor societies, although there are many students who opt not to be part of these organizations. One student leader, recalling her own experience of preparing for the ACT through her church, observed that there were not ACT preparation classes in a local high school. When she approached the high school with her idea of starting a prep class, she was sent to the vice president’s office, and within three weeks, she and a friend had started a nonprofit organization to offer ACT preparation classes to students several times each week. When she was unable to continue the commitment, she passed the responsibility along to someone else, though she was uncertain of whether the efforts had been sustained through the present day. Based on this student’s comments, it seemed that although student-led initiatives provide important contributions to the community, the transient nature of undergraduate students creates sustainability challenges and raises a question about the benefits of ad hoc efforts to provide service. Local high school students, teachers, and administrators may come to rely on student-taught ACT preparation courses, and when students can no longer provide the service, expectations are no longer met.

There are some opportunities for students to be involved in these efforts if faculty invite
them to collaborate on projects, with some disciplines having more opportunities than others. Otherwise, there is no centralized location for students to find opportunities for direct engagement. Although some students are engaged in faculty research, many students do not know about continuing education or cooperative extension programs. For this reason, many students do not think the institution is visibly committed to advancing the social, economic, and political status of African Americans. Instead, those students feel that the real efforts to engage in the community are grassroots efforts led by students.

The majority of community outreach and engagement initiatives are run by RUU faculty and administrators. Consistently, faculty and administrators noted that their departments and centers are outgrowths of initiatives designed to be responsive to community needs. One staff member is a director for a project that aims to help families develop their assets over their lifetimes, while simultaneously working to impact legislation and change public policy. Her program has a short-term vision of touching people individually while simultaneously pursuing long-term goals of changing the system in which community members live. Another administrator with a faculty background noted that the work of his center “evolved out of trying to make the nation accountable for an injustice to the African-American community, and then how we ensure that that violation doesn’t occur again.” The director of another major center involved in outreach efforts noted that the center strives to offer “first-class, impact-producing programs.” As part of its mandate, the center he runs addresses issues of community development, small-business development, agriculture, natural resources, health and nutrition, youth entrepreneurship, and science and technology. The center’s approach to community work is one of cooperation and collaboration with farmers, small landowners, and their families.

According to a number of faculty and administrators at the university, racial minorities in the region are most affected by heart disease, HIV/AIDS, cancer, diabetes, and obesity. Faculty
at the institution work with affected parties to develop an agenda and make a positive and significant impact. One structure for addressing these health disparities is a campus-based institute that carries out research and education. The unit works with a broad range of campus departments and programs, including those that might not appear to be directly related, such as those involved in creating the physical environments through building design and construction. Education and financial resources alone will not be sufficient to end health disparities. As an example, access to transportation along with transportation routes may also affect whether individuals can access treatment. Although collaboration among campus units occurs at Racial Uplift University, faculty and administrators acknowledged that turf wars sometimes occur, however subtly or overtly, when a desire for credit or ownership emerges or when an individual feels he or she has the required or best-fit expertise for a particular initiative.

University members help local and regional populations increase their economic viability indirectly through education and action research. Educating a disadvantaged population about behaviors that can prevent a health problem can reduce the number of doctor visits and required medicine for an individual, thereby avoiding or alleviating financial burden for health care. Action research serves two purposes at Racial Uplift University (RUU). Action research provides a learning lab for students who are involved with faculty research projects and it seeks to identify the needs of poor, African-American communities in the South in order to formulate solutions and problem solve. A professor of biology who runs one of the many outreach programs housed in an academic department described the philosophy of action research at RUU:

How do we make a difference, a real difference? So to be able to do that, of course, we’re going to do the research in the lab or the social research. Of course, we’re going to do the training and education so that we can create the next line of researchers coming along.
But we have to be in the community, we have to talk to the community, and we want to partner with them so that we can now develop strategies based on what they’re telling us, and not so much us going in the community and telling them what needs to happen with them but actually listening to their issues. Then in partnership, creating a research dynamic, sort of a community of researchers that we would then form between the academic body and the community.

This faculty member’s comments reflect the philosophy of community engagement shared by most members of Racial Uplift University that derives from a conviction that members of a community know best what they need. As such, outsiders who wish to support a community must first engage in deep listening to understand those needs before partnering with the community to offer support.

A complementary approach to action research is translational research, which one associate professor described as the process after research is complete when the researchers return to the community and “provide information and translate it at their level so that they can make changes.” This approach captures another element of the research philosophy: that researchers consistently find ways to make the data applicable to communities in the Black Belt. When initial approaches to successful implementation of changes that might improve the lives of community members have resulted in failure, researchers have worked with sociologists and psychologists to try to understand what might prevent community members from making the changes. One administrator with faculty responsibilities suggested that neither the language of community engagement nor the idea of community-based participatory research is new. He explained that these ideas characterize the efforts of the founder whose work essentially sought answers to the questions that come from a community’s lived experiences, with the big picture question: “How do we teach people to do what they need to survive?” Faculty continue their
work in this tradition in the present day, collaborating with communities in the region to solve problems.

A faculty member who directs one of the prominent centers on campus added nuance to the community outreach narrative by suggesting that some paradigms of community outreach may lead to an approach to research that yields ineffective results. As an example, he explained that a faculty member coming out of bioethics evaluates research from a social or behavioral research paradigm. From his perspective, the former paradigm seeks solutions and the latter seeks alternatives to problems. He then turned to the issue of African Americans’ health problems, which has a lot of traction on campus, to further illustrate his point. One model to addressing health problems might be to view differences as disparities; the goal in this paradigm becomes achieving equal circumstances for all people, but as he explained it, being equal could mean bringing everyone to the same poor level of health. In contrast, if the health issues were framed from a social justice perspective, then the focus of the work becomes how to elicit behavior across a broad spectrum of fields that will result in improved health for those who have medical problems.

Aside from differences in philosophies, faculty and administrators at Racial Uplift University are likeminded in their approach and when one discovers a way to improve their approach to community engagement, the discovery may benefit all. Recently, some faculty realized that most of their programs focus on the needs of the adult population, which may not maximize the potential for change. A department head explained:

Sometimes you work with adults and you get a certain reaction, but we realized that it’s, to a large degree, the children that will make the change. And for that reason, [we’re] going into the schools in an effort to address some of these same issues and going into the lower grades. Hopefully, they will, in turn, impact their parents and by impacting parents
This faculty member’s comments illustrate the kind of comprehensive systems thinking that characterizes the institution’s approach to outreach and engagement. Engagement with children and adolescents outside the campus has not traditionally been the focus of programs in continuing education, cooperative extension programs, or research. Prioritizing work with young people in the community incorporates a longitudinal approach to affecting change and might thereby increase the effectiveness of the institution’s historical mission of educating and serving African Americans.

In summary, at Racial Uplift University, faculty, staff, and students carry out community engagement and outreach efforts in a variety of forms. Both through student-organized activities and individual initiatives, students serve their local and sometimes hometown communities in forms that draw on their experiences. As college students, many have the academic skills and knowledge to tutor students. They may bring their academic training to bear on problems of health or the physical environment. Staff direct and participate in a variety of projects to help African Americans in the local and regional communities build their personal wealth. Staff also advocate for the needs of African Americans in their efforts to affect systemic change through legislative action and changes in public policy. Faculty conduct both action and translational research projects in collaboration with communities and driven by community needs. They then use the findings to help improve African Americans’ conditions in the Black Belt.

At times, outreach and engagement efforts are coordinated across the university; however, there is no consistent coordination and centralization of efforts. This characteristic indicates how deeply the historical mission permeates the current institutional culture. Decentralization makes outreach and engagement efforts less visible because they appear to stand alone, and it has the additional drawback of leaving some students with the perception that
the university is doing little to advance the social, economic, and political standing of African Americans in the U.S. Additionally, some students choose not to become involved in the student organizations that coordinate the greatest community engagement efforts and may, therefore, be uncertain of how to go about getting involved in outreach efforts.

The institution’s long history of supporting African Americans outside the organization is a part of the mission that makes it distinctive from the thousands of other colleges and universities in the U.S. Based on participants’ comments, it is difficult to imagine that members of the university community would turn away anyone in need. Students are involved in a variety of local service endeavors involving tutoring and mentoring, and some also have opportunities to work with faculty on action research projects. Those who are neither involved in faculty research or in a student organization that is a service branch may not know how to become engaged in the community.

University-sponsored outreach and engagement efforts are numerous and span a broad range of topics, including learning how to accumulate personal savings and learning about agricultural innovations. Some programs focus on change within the individual, while others focus on change in public policy. Outreach efforts that are more research-focused are conducted using action research approaches in which researchers work as partners with communities. After community members and researchers identify the community’s needs or problem, faculty conduct research and then share the findings with the community to make the research applicable through solutions. Occasionally, tensions arise when faculty become territorial about their work. Differences of opinion about framing a problem as a disparity to address versus framing a problem as an issue of social justice with ethical implications may also contribute to tensions among various faculty members. Regardless of philosophical differences, community and outreach efforts seek widespread benefit in terms of the social, economic, and political domains.
of African Americans at both an individual level and through system change.

The institution’s outreach and engagement efforts require significant financial resources. Limited institutional funding does not signal that this work is low priority for the institution; there is simply not enough funding to execute all the programs and initiatives that have been started and maintained over the years. Faculty, staff, and administrators regularly seek external funding to support their efforts, but even external dollars do not make it easier for institutional leaders to complete the task of prioritizing spending targets. The institution carries out its educational and service mission at a satisfactory level, but given the difficulties of allocating resources, at any given time, some fundamental element of the university’s daily operating procedures is probably functioning below the desired standard. The next section explores some of the resource challenges faced by the institution, and how, in one case, the challenge has been turned into an asset.

**Resource Deficiencies as Challenges and Opportunities**

University leaders face significant challenges in determining priorities in the use of resources. Students on the college campus are the primary population served by the institution, but African Americans in the local community and across the region are as important, or nearly as important, as the students. Decisions about resource allocation must be driven by institutional priorities, and the students on campus are at the top of the list. The institution likely demonstrates its commitment to providing a rigorous education to students by selecting competent and innovative faculty and administrators who must be compensated appropriately. However, that institutional leaders choose not to dedicate fiscal resources to maintenance of the facilities in which their students are living and learning indicates that resources are likely being diverted to a competing set of priorities.

Related to the preceding concern about competing priorities are the issues of quality and
standards as defined by external accrediting agencies. One of the schools within the university went through the re-accrediting process, and when the review was complete, the university was required to undertake a complete renovation of the facility in which the school was housed. In describing the dire state of affairs that led to the recommendation, one tenured faculty member from within that school explained:

We were in buildings that were run down — that had problems with heating, cooling or no heating and cooling, and had broken windows; and I mean, it was a pretty rough environment. You know, plaster falling off walls. And, so, probably the one greatest change we’ve gone through is just a multi-million-dollar renovation of our facilities and that made a … huge transformation. But also, increased budgets for faculty and for resources, like computer resources. We had no computer lab, no computers in the department. … Within a year or two after I’d been here, they were all broken and we went from a few old, on the verge of breaking down computers to no computers at all. … It was very tough at that point. … The school has really gone though a radical transformation due, in large part, I would say primarily to pressures from our accrediting agency. Our school is required to be accredited. … We’d lost our accreditation because of resource problems, the first time in the history of the accrediting agency that ever happened. And that’s what created all kinds of waves and an inner turmoil of its own here on campus, between us and the upper administration. It was a very tough period. There really wasn’t a situation where you could just point to one person and say it’s their fault. It was a systemic failure that caught a lot of people by surprise, and I think had been building probably over decades and just kind of reached a boiling point by around the time I came.

This faculty member’s comments illustrated the poor conditions in which students and faculty
were forced to conduct their teaching and learning. His description of what happened seemed to suggest a tension over resources between the academic program and the central administration that was resolved only due to the influence of an external body. Colleges and universities are accustomed to a certain degree of autonomy. Being forced to make institutional changes due to pressures outside the university represents a shift toward greater accountability to external agencies. More importantly, loss of accreditation represents an even more significant problem for the historically served constituency in reducing the value of alumni’s degrees. Loss of accreditation also potentially affects alumni’s careers or graduate school prospects when a degree from an accredited institution is a requirement for entry to graduate school, licensing, or employment. Finally, loss of accreditation could also result in decreased enrollment, leading to additional resource challenges for the university.

Perceived value of a degree from RUU is critical for the institution to maintain its market share of students. Although most members of the campus seemed to agree that the institution provides a rigorous education for students and is a site of serious scholarship, there was also strong agreement about the fact that RUU enrolls students that other colleges and universities are not willing to admit. In order for RUU to continue its historical legacy of educating African Americans who will become critical thinkers and leaders of the future, it most certainly has to better articulate its unique value proposition. The irony is that in order to execute the historical mission, the institution will have to present to the public an argument for its added value and distinctive contributions to the broader culture. Furthermore, over time, as African-American students gain greater access to a broader range of colleges and universities, RUU may find itself in more fierce competition with other HBCUs. Because of RUU’s institutional prestige, its efforts to remain viable may exacerbate pressures on other HBCUs and help close the doors on these peer institutions.
For some members of the campus community, resource challenges were eventually viewed with a sense of humor and were reframed as opportunities. At this particular campus, many students joked about “The Racial Uplift University Experience,” which they argue nearly every student experiences before graduation. Rather than a point of sensitivity, students found some amusement in the variety of challenges they encounter while at Racial Uplift University. Resource limitations translated to the continued existence of some outdated and poorly operating facilities, as well as limited human resources to support students. Students believed that the RUU Experience, which includes the RUU Runaround, creates a shared bond with alumni, thereby strengthening the sense of family and community. The “Runaround,” perceived by many students as an experience shared by all alumni, refers to the difficulty students experience with regard to student services, including the registrar’s office, the bursar, and financial aid. One student leader suggested that being a student at the university means that:

You’ve got to make stuff work here often. You’ve got to make it work. Your room’s hot, you’ve got to fix it. Your room’s cold, you’ve got to fix it. The lights might not work. Hot water might not work. We had a blackout.

In this comment and many more like it, students suggested that the specific environment of Racial Uplift University challenged them to be resourceful. The student quoted above further explained that as students work to solve problems, they develop a sense of humility and gratitude. The humility seems to come from recognizing that there are limitations on what one knows and what one can control, while the gratitude seems to come from an understanding that Racial Uplift University students, even with their resource challenges, lead more privileged lives than many of the African Americans in the South. Additionally, many students expressed an opinion shared by the alumni they encounter that over their four years at the institution, they do not have everything they need. Those circumstances help students develop a sense of confidence
about taking on challenges after college. One senior surmised that employers are more inclined to choose a graduate of Racial Uplift University because “they feel like they have a soldier in their workforce. They have somebody who’s not going to be complaining about nothing. Why? Because they already went through it. You’ve got the person who just been through it all and is just like, ‘Hey throw something at me, I already did it or I can take it because I had that training.’” This student, whose opinion was also shared by many students, suggested that having a college experience in which campus resources are limited may benefit alumni when they are looking for jobs.

According to faculty at RUU, another resource challenge to the mission of community engagement is the lack of a communications infrastructure among the populations that the university seeks to serve. There are no databases or social networks that can be tapped to disseminate or solicit information. Consistent communication is important for the development of partnerships with communities to help them address problems identified by the communities. Outreach designed to educate a community about problems identified through independently conducted research requires a means of communicating with affected populations. Similarly, recruitment for research partners who are likely to benefit from participation is difficult without a communication infrastructure. To this end, the numerous churches in the area surrounding the university provide the necessary network.

Perhaps the greatest challenge that results from having limited financial resources is finding ways to continue to offer free or low-cost education to communities in a region with high rates of poverty. The continued provision of these programs and services, such as an annual farmers conference that has taken place for one hundred years, creates expectations among community members. Defunding these programs would remove a resource from the community on which it has come to depend. Faculty and administrators raise funds to support these
programs or supplement university funding, but they have difficulty obtaining enough grants to support their projects over time.

In summary, Racial Uplift University is challenged in producing enough revenue to cover all the expenses associated with its mission. Local and regional communities are impoverished and cannot bolster the university with financial support. The university is in a constant state of triage when it comes to repairing and upgrading facilities, and at least one time in its recent history, the institution faced serious consequences from an inability to meet a national standard. Limited resources also impact students’ daily experiences, from office closures in student service areas to living conditions that are outdated or in disrepair. Although frustrating in the moment, students have a sense of humor about it, and they find it builds up their resilience and resourcefulness. Students believe that prospective employers know that students from the institution will have these qualities and show them preferential treatment, though they do not know whether this perception is accurate. In short, resource limitations create challenges that must be overcome or endured. Persistence through the challenges has resulted in some benefits to institutional members, and in situations when that is not the case, challenges serve as an impetus for the university to find ways to improve its position with regard to resources.

**Concluding Points**

Racial Uplift University continues to pursue its historical mission of educating African-American students on its campus and provide a variety of services to communities that are both local and regional. This finding is critical given the continuing inequity of access and opportunity for African Americans in the South (Perna, Milem, Gerald, Baum, Rowan, & Hutchens, 2006). RUU’s twofold mission promotes education, graduate study, workforce preparation, social mobility, basic survival, and changes in public policy affecting African-American communities. In serving the specific needs of African Americans, the social,
economic, and political standings of African Americans in the U.S. are improved (see Brown & Davis, 2001, for a discussion of how HBCUs create and transmit social capital and promote social equality).

Both the history and mission are revered by those who are familiar with them. Important leaders in African-American history led and taught at the institution. Over time, these leaders helped create an institution that serves as a hub for organizing change efforts, and the values they brought to their work helped to shape a culture in which African Americans work together to help each other rise out of poverty and build their future. Their persistent and creative natures allowed them to find practical solutions to a variety of problems ranging from fundraising to agriculture. From its inception, the institution has been a site of change.

Despite the institution’s celebrated history and mission, there is some evidence that current students are less familiar with the mission than are faculty and administrators. Today’s students are more removed from the Civil Rights Movement, and some of their parents may have been born after the Civil Rights Act. In their lifetimes, educational systems and public spaces have never been segregated, which is not to say that they have not experienced de facto segregation. Still, current students may not view themselves as targets of systemic racism, and they may therefore be less attuned to the institution’s historical mission of racial uplift. Institutional leaders are concerned about this growing disconnection.

In contrast, faculty and staff remain highly attuned to the institution’s historical mission, and they enact it across the domains of teaching, research, and service. The strong and continued institutional commitment to serving African-American students, communities, and community members is evident through the excellence in teaching that results in the general disproportionately large numbers of African-American college graduates who come from the university and, more notably, the disproportionately large numbers of alumni who successfully
pursue graduate studies. Some staff rarely work with students, instead working only with other professionals and community members. In contrast, many faculty include students in their community-based action research projects.

Despite the many extension and outreach programs, students reported that the institution’s commitment to serving African Americans across the region was not obvious. Students may be so engaged in their own service efforts that they may not pay attention. Furthermore, in some academic programs there is a less-obvious connection that can be made between the area of study and a community’s needs, and opportunities for students to work collaboratively with faculty and staff are limited. Whatever the case, there is no centralized location for extension and outreach efforts to the community, and although the importance of community partnership and service is deeply embedded in the institution’s culture, it also means that students and staff do not have a central office to work with in terms of assisting and coordinating community initiatives. Such an office might also prove useful in limiting redundancy of effort or excessive outreach to local communities.

RUU’s unique value proposition is its dual mission of serving the campus community and African Americans in the region. The institution’s distinctiveness contributes to the diversity among higher education institutions and superficially allows for greater choice for students. The institution’s contributions to the social, economic, and political progress of African Americans produce a set of challenges that cannot be avoided. By meeting the educational needs of many students who may not be admitted at Predominantly White Institutions, Racial Uplift University is forced to perpetuate a system that permits other institutions to continue ignoring African-American students, which is not a criticism so much as it is a point of observation.

Students who come from predominantly Black environments before college continue a segregated experience; as a result, the institution itself may be an unwilling participant in
segregating the higher education sphere. Advocates of HBCUs are divided in terms of opinions about increasing the racial diversity of HBCUs. Some argue that increasing the racial diversity of HBCUs can expand the educational benefits of HBCUs by exposing more students to African-American history and culture, thereby strengthening the historical mission, while in stark contrast, other advocates of HBCUs believe that having a less predominantly Black student body might move the institution further away from its historical mission (Gasman, 2012).

Finally, faculty and staff aspire to engage local and regional communities in a partnership model, though there are some mild differences in the way they frame problems. Some frame their work in terms of disparities, others in terms of social justice and ethics; but the end result of positive impact seems to be the same. Although faculty and staff seem to be successful in working collaboratively with community members, there remains a subtle missionary element to their work with communities that may be unaware of population-specific problems such as health disparities.

Access to the institution was dependent upon the agreement of not disclosing the institution’s identity. Although there were many aspects of RUU’s institutional culture that constitute an organizational saga (Clark, 1970, 1972) and a compelling narrative, these findings could not discuss them, making invisible the more distinctive elements of the institutional identity and culture. As a result, the findings reported for this case study likely apply to many other Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Mission distinctiveness and unique value proposition may be harder to identify given that HBCUs have shared a common mission since their inception. The majority of needs of RUU’s historically served community are very basic, but the amount of need is so widespread and so great that the institution essentially treads water in carrying out its mission; there may be less capacity to be innovative. This observation underscores the need to articulate a unique value proposition, an argument that advocates of
HBCUs have made for many years. Despite the perception that RUU’s organizational history and culture is not entirely distinctive from other HBCUs, this case study still demonstrates that in enacting the distinctive mission of the institution, students, faculty, and staff advance the social, economic, and political status of African Americans in the U.S. Although not without its challenges, the institution successfully serves the needs of a historically underserved population and allows for more substantive membership and participation in the nation’s diverse democracy.
CHAPTER SIX

A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN’S EQUITY COLLEGE

This study of institutional diversity examined the outcomes produced by colleges and universities that were established to serve a narrowly defined population. The study explored the extent to which the organizational culture at these institutions reflected a contemporary commitment to a mission of serving its historical niche community. An examination of each institution’s community outreach and engagement revealed more complex conceptualizations of community and indicated how institutional efforts to improve the lives of those in communities other than the historically served constituency crossed superficially defined categories of identity.

This chapter presents findings from Women’s Equity College (WEC), a single-sex women’s liberal arts college established in the early 1800s. The first part of the chapter presents a historical and cultural narrative of WEC, describing the unique learning environment that results from an all-female student population and how that translates to important distinctive outcomes. The second part of the chapter describes the market challenges that result from having a liberal arts focus, including declining interest and enrollment. The third part of the chapter describes WEC’s struggle to maintain its mission of educating women in a single-sex environment. The final section discusses equity and diversity at WEC.

The Historical and Cultural Narrative of Women’s Equity College

Women’s Equity College, a pillar of liberal arts colleges in the Northeast, boasts as part of its heritage the honor of being one of the earliest women’s colleges established in the United States. WEC is a small, rural, liberal arts institution for women that awards baccalaureate degrees in nearly sixty programs of study and master’s degrees in several areas. There are approximately 2,400 undergraduate students and fewer than 20 graduate students. If the domestic
student population, almost 50 percent of the students are White, 9 percent are Latino, 6 percent are Asian, and 5 percent are African American. Roughly 25 percent are international students. There are slightly more than two hundred full-time faculty and fifty part-time faculty, resulting in a student to faculty ratio of 9:1. Annual tuition at Women’s Equity College is close to $54,000 (NCES, n.d.).

Until colleges and universities began opening their doors to women, with Oberlin College leading the way in 1833, women’s options for higher education were limited to a small group of single-sex institutions. By offering higher education options to a population of students who were uniformly excluded from other institutions, women’s colleges across the country began serving a marginalized population. The historical mission of educating women is the most distinctive characteristic of WEC.

In the case of Women’s Equity College, the rebellious act of breaking the gender barrier established the precedent for the college to work toward promoting equity for other marginalized groups. Most of the women who attended the original women’s colleges came from well-to-do backgrounds and were seeking an education more akin to a finishing school. As a contrast, Women’s Equity College not only sought to serve a population excluded from higher education based on gender, but from its very genesis, WEC’s founder worked to open the doors to students of modest means, many of whom were farmers’ daughters. One full professor in the sciences explained that the founder enacted a missionary approach to her educational delivery in “the sense of reaching out: the idea that education belongs to everyone and that everyone should have the chance to take hold of what education can be and make it her own. That idea is still key to what this institution strives to be.”

The historical commitment to create access for low-income students is “deep in the DNA” of Women’s Equity College, one administrator explained. The practice has carried
through to the present day and remains a factor in the types of students who ultimately matriculate at WEC. The same administrator explained that the institution is “less likely to attract wealthy students than other places that have legacies of wealth because wealth attracts wealth.”

To this day, at least 70 percent of students are on financial aid of some sort and the institution regularly ranks at the top of the list when it comes to the percentage of first-generation, low-income students. Much of the philosophy of serving students with multiple marginalities has carried through the years and has expanded to a culture of commitment to equity and diversity that pervades the campus culture.

A student population made up solely of women creates a unique learning environment that supports student success. Men are absent from the majority of classes, although formal arrangements with other local institutions create some opportunities for male students from other institutions to enroll in some classes at WEC, creating co-ed classroom experiences. Single-sex classrooms encourage the development of each woman’s active engagement in the learning process, helping students become more confident in their abilities. An administrator explained:

“There’s no way you can have any unintended … emphasis put on males in the classroom by a professor calling on males more frequently than on the females because male students simply aren’t there. I think it puts the students more on the spot. They have to participate, and if they haven’t had that experience anywhere else, I think it's especially important because it helps to build their self-confidence. It helps to make them realize, “I have to be an active student. If I don't do it, it won't get done,” rather than thinking “the guys will take care of it.”

For many members of the Women’s Equity College community, the absence of men from the student body is acceptable and sometimes embraced. An administrator with significant responsibilities for public relations shared the perspective of one of her students who said, “I
don’t know why people think 15,000 men within a nine-mile radius isn't enough.” This administrator went on to explain that the Women’s Equity College student is “not cloistered. It’s not like there are not men on campus. But it’s a fabulous advantage for a woman to come to a place like Women’s Equity College because she is taken seriously and expected to excel, and because of that, she does.”

Not being taken seriously equates to being dismissed as frivolous or insignificant. Women’s Equity College students are not exposed to experiences that may make them feel intellectually inadequate or inferior to men, so they feel valued. A sophomore student asked rhetorically, “How many times have you been put down because you’re a woman?” Being in a single-sex environment offsets the likelihood of such interactions simply because there are so many women around. The all-women environment highlights the critical issues facing women. She continued, “Because there are more women in the room, their voices matter.” She further explained that in the same way a discussion of a contemporary event among groups of historians would likely focus on the historical significance of the event because of their shared profession, assembling a critical mass of women makes their experiences and concerns as women matter.

The culture of Women’s Equity College is thus one of support. The ways in which faculty engage their students increase the success students have navigating the college environment. Generally speaking, many low-income, first-generation students of color are academically underprepared compared to the average student when they arrive at college. At WEC, some of the faculty identified racism in K-12 school systems as part of the reason, but these students work with the faculty to remedy the preparation problem. One associate professor in the humanities noted that the students’ confidence to fix their academic weaknesses “comes out of the relationships that students develop with other members of the community.” In describing her efforts to help underprepared students develop the skills necessary to succeed at
Women’s Equity College, the faculty member explained that she seeks to disrupt the “patterns of inequality that come into her classroom” by requiring students to do a lot of writing and then subsequently putting in enough time to give them quality feedback in writing or in person, if necessary. She holds the conviction that “not being able to write is actually not having a voice, is not trusting their ideas are good ideas, or not trusting themselves to be able to … understand material well enough to have a good idea.” In her many years at Women’s Equity College, she has consistently found that students who come into her classroom with lower levels of preparation inevitably succeed under this model. Her personal philosophy of education and carefully designed pedagogy reflect the campus ethos of setting high expectations for students and providing the necessary supports to help students develop academically in order to meet those expectations.

The Women’s Equity College advising culture also illustrates the strong commitment to student success. Theoretically, faculty could provide the signatory authorization required for students to register for classes without reviewing students’ academic plans with them; however, doing so would run counter to the institution’s culture. Faculty are socialized into a culture that takes advising responsibilities seriously, and institutional structures, such as the advising load, reinforce that notion. One faculty member commented that the advising load is heavy, and explained:

Students seem to get the message: Go to your advisor. Plus, they are required to get our clearance before they register. They never register without you seeing what they're doing, and we get great stuff from the Dean of Studies Office about things to be sure to cover in your advising. “Are you checking with your students about whether or not they want to apply for a Fulbright or some other scholarship?” “Be sure to ask your students about what they did during the summer and how that might translate into something useful.”
As illustrated by this faculty member’s comments, the faculty, half of whom are women, are highly engaged with students through advising, mentoring, and academic coaching.

The learning environment at WEC is collaborative rather than competitive and helps students develop knowledge, competencies, and a variety of soft skills. The small class size and academic culture force unwilling students to engage in class discussions such that they are able to develop trust in their abilities, cultivate a point of view, and develop a voice to communicate those perspectives.

According to one senior, WEC students become “well-formed individuals.” In students’ minds, WEC provides them with the tools to learn and challenge themselves and to establish individualized worldviews. In many departments across the college, including those in social sciences and humanities, faculty consistently noted that students graduate with strong reading, writing, and critical-thinking skills and confident voices that they use to express their concerns and viewpoints beyond the walls of Women’s Equity College. One senior explained that her experience of the mission was such that she felt students were expected to undergo important transformations that helped them feel empowered.

Without a doubt, the earliest faculty and administrators understood the necessity of single-sex education since women were excluded from institutions of higher learning. However, with the introduction of co-education and the slow but steady opening of higher education to women, there seems to be a never-ending debate about whether a single-sex environment is beneficial, necessary, or even relevant in contemporary times.

As options for co-education became more widespread, the once-steady supply-and-demand relationship between female students and women’s colleges changed drastically, as growing numbers of female students wanting to pursue higher education in co-educational settings. As a result, the number of women’s colleges declined. Today, few students who enroll
at Women’s Equity College intentionally select a single-sex institution. A senior administrative leader explained that perhaps 3 or 4 percent of students who take the PSAT indicate interest in attending a women’s college, and that “tiny” percentage is echoed in the current enrollment of Women’s Equity College students who indicate having seriously considered single-sex education during the college search process. The shared sentiment among some administrators, faculty, and students is that students at Women’s Equity College “just ended up here,” but even the women who didn’t intend to go to college in a single-sex environment “stay because it is a women’s college.”

Throughout the years, alumnae, faculty, and administrators have been ambivalent about single-sex education. An administrator in the alumnae association explained:

I have found the reactions to be virtually the same, and that is that there are those—typically the ones closer to having graduated—who are extraordinarily opposed to the institution becoming co-ed. And those who are further out seem to recognize they've experienced more things in their life; they've experienced the reality of business and that sometimes you have to do what you have to do.

These comments suggest that support for the single-sex environment varies across constituencies and that these perspectives change over time. Furthermore, the increasing access to higher education seems to have influenced alumnae’s opinions about co-education. Because WEC is no longer one of only few institutions of higher learning open to female students, alumnae are less opposed to abandoning the single-sex model.

Although most of the students who participated in the study did not choose to attend WEC because of the single-sex environment, they held overwhelmingly positive views about that aspect of the environment because it offers students the tools to learn, empower and challenge themselves. They described WEC as a place where women can thrive; a place that
values giving women the opportunity to learn in an environment where the sky is the limit. A similar pattern existed for faculty, many of whom were drawn to Women’s Equity College for its reputation of being a place focused on social change and a place that teaches women to be agents of social transformation. One faculty member expressed her belief that Women’s Equity College aspires to “be an institution that uses education transformatively to create justice.”

The attraction of Women’s Equity College, then, is that the experience represents an “education of women at a very intense level,” as one administrator put it. She added that as a “socially conscious kind of community,” the college is known for producing graduates who will go “out in service to their communities, to their culture and to their government, to their families.” According to faculty and administrators at WEC, one of the most distinctive contributions that Women’s Equity College makes to American society is in facilitating the development of a disproportionately high number of women scientists compared to co-ed institutions and women who become local and national leaders — an observation supported by empirical work (see e.g., Rosenberg, 1988; Harwarth, Maline, & DeBra, 1997).

Social consciousness characterizes the Women’s Equity College community, which holds what one faculty member described as “a real commitment to equity and excellence and to social justice” and values diversity, egalitarianism, and the “common good.” One junior faculty member explained, “If you looked at course content, you would see people talk about those things in pretty powerful ways. And it’s not just the kind of talking about them and reading about them in the class; it’s thinking about all the work that our students do in terms of community-based learning.”

This administrator acknowledged the very liberal campus climate and noted that purposeful engagement is often associated with the phrase “social justice,” which communicates a liberal political stance. She also noted that many WEC alumnae will join the Peace Corps and
pursue other livelihoods that will translate to modest incomes. However, she also conveyed WEC’s hope that some alumnae will amass great wealth in their pursuit of purposeful engagement with the world and then give back to the college or to society. In this way, this administrator explained the institutional priority on developing individuals who will address social concerns. An associate professor in the humanities captured the sentiment, explaining:

I want them to see ideally. I want them to see a relationship between who they are and how they live their lives and social processes that unfold for other people halfway around the world. And I want them to see — get a sense of — we all belong to a tightly integrated, coherent entity that is the human race, and all of us are affecting the rest of us. But I never say that. … I just try to lay out material so that if people think it all the way through, that’s a conclusion they can arrive at.

This faculty member was expressing an interest in catalyzing students’ sense of responsibility to others. Although she spoke for herself, her perspective was echoed in the comments of many faculty and staff at the college.

The historical and cultural context of WEC projects a set of values and convictions that shape its actions within the broader society. In the sections that follow, I highlight the ways in which market concerns and forces challenge the institution’s commitment to its mission. I also describe how, in response to market challenges, WEC actors made decisions about curriculum, marketing, and admissions.

**Market Challenges of Being a Liberal Arts College**

Women’s Equity College is dedicated to its mission of providing a liberal arts education, and the senior leadership of the institution recognizes the need to offer a form of liberal arts education that is, as one senior administrator noted, “of this time, relevant, of the world.” They recognize that critics of the liberal arts feel such an education is no longer relevant for a high-
tech society. For many members of Women’s Equity College, the liberal arts education that the college offers is relevant to contemporary society. As described by the director of a campus center committed to liberal arts in the contemporary culture:

What the liberal arts is about is promoting the public good; and it is about citizenship, critical thinking, and learning to become a critical thinker. And those things are political in an important sense, but they're not partisan in the way that some people understand it. So when you talk about things like teaching about inequality, should we teach about inequality? Absolutely, we should. Inequality is one of the most important social issues you can think of, and it would be a terrible crime not to teach about inequality — inequality of race, inequality of gender, inequality of sexual identity, inequality of anything you can think of. But that doesn't preclude — in fact, it necessitates — a careful interrogation of what you might then call a left-wing position on policies to rectify these inequalities; or even the idea that these inequalities need government rectification as opposed to other kinds of solutions. So we have the responsibility to get students to think seriously about justice. But we have a responsibility not to tell them what to think about it—just to think about how it really is our job. And that's really important. We need to interrogate the views of so-called liberal students.

This center director’s comments reinforced the awareness of the left-wing character of the student body. His perception was that these students, who have strong liberal political convictions, may be difficult to challenge in terms of broadening their worldviews and perspectives. More importantly, his comments communicate a widely shared perspective on campus that liberal students can play a critical role in the development of citizens. Support for a continued liberal arts curriculum is deeply shared by WEC faculty and many administrators.
Prospective students are a “hard sell” on a single-sex, liberal arts education because they and their parents do not necessarily see a women’s college education “as necessarily helpful … either socially or intellectually.” A major concern is the marketability that students have upon graduating. In addition to prospective students’ declining interests in single-sex institutions, they are increasingly interested in larger environments that are in or close to urban centers. They also look for majors and educational experiences that can translate easily into careers. Together, these characteristics represent the antithesis of Women’s Equity College, as a liberal arts, single-sex college located in a rural area. The director of admissions explained that her department is “leveraging every dime and penny as creatively as we possibly can to flip students to say yes to Women’s Equity College.” They seek to do that in creative ways. For example, Women’s Equity College created a special designation for the highest-achieving entering students. The head of marketing explained that such special designations—despite resistance and objection by some faculty—give students and families a reason, or rather an excuse, to say why the daughter is choosing Women’s Equity College over an offer of admission to an Ivy League institution or some other prestigious school.

The intensity of faculty-student engagement is possible, in part, due to the small faculty-student ratio. That ratio also creates one of the single-greatest expenses in providing a liberal arts education to a small student population for whom a large percentage of the tuition is subsidized. Other high-impact educational learning experiences, such as research opportunities and studying abroad, add to the expensive price tag of a Women’s Equity College education. The comprehensive annual cost (tuition, room, and board) of attending Women’s Equity College is over fifty thousand dollars, and many within the organization feel that the price tag is “unsustainable.” For an institution like Women’s Equity College, the business model may not be financially viable in the future. The only way for Women’s Equity College to perpetuate the
system is by continuing to admit students and generate revenue. The rise in cost of higher education seems to have no end in sight, and as a result, many colleges and universities have had to seek alternate forms of revenue in recent years.

The business model of the college depends on meeting an enrollment target. In previous decades the demand for a liberal arts education outpaced the supply. Women’s Equity College decided to expand enrollment even after the previously all-male predominantly White liberal arts colleges became co-ed, and although one associate professor in the social sciences acknowledged that the institutional leaders could not have known that the market for a liberal arts education would decline, he still felt that decision was a critical mistake. He further explained that in his mind, one solution to revenue challenges is to shrink the student body and grow the endowment. Such an effort could be consistent with enrollment trends, but would require significant realignment between resources and expenditures.

In response to declining interest in the liberal arts, the institution has moved in the direction of pre-professional or more practical training, diverting some resources and focus to the curriculum-to-career transition. Prior to a societal shift toward preference for a more practical education, resources to help students with career development existed primarily in the co-curriculum, but in recent years there have been more efforts to professionalize the curriculum. Women’s Equity College created a minor that pairs a course of study with some practical experiences, and a large program exists to promote the pairing of a liberal arts education with experiential learning and public engagement. When the senior leadership and administration announced the new initiative, the faculty exerted major resistance. It has taken great effort to win any kind of support. One faculty member in the humanities reported:

In the course of the faculty saying to the administration, “You can't make us change the curriculum because no one was going to give us a grant; that's not how it's supposed to
happen,” I was sort of on the front line as the chair of the Faculty Governance Committee trying to communicate with the president. And I was in one of those meetings where she’d … dropped the language and she said, “We have to do this because we're losing in terms of admissions. Prospective students want this. If we don't give it to them, they'll go to Earlham.”

This individual’s comments indicated that the faculty are still responsible for and in charge of the curriculum. Her comments further underscore how the commitment to the liberal arts is strong, nearly unwavering. However, practical considerations seemed to sway this longstanding member of the faculty who showed a willingness to modify the curriculum, knowing that it helped the institution’s enrollment and therefore tuition revenue, for, as he acknowledged, without students there can be no college.

Decreased interest in WEC as a liberal arts college is driving enrollment down. For this reason, but also because of the single-sex nature of WEC, the dilemma of remaining a women’s college is a challenge that WEC has faced for decades. The next section discusses this issue in greater detail.

**Marketization and Staying Focused on the Mission of WEC**

In the 1960s, Women’s Equity College explored the possibility of co-education, and the faculty and administrators seemed to be divided on the point. Some alumnae reacted more strongly to the announcement that a fact-finding commission had been formed to explore the possibility of co-education and its potential benefits and pitfalls. A letter in the Women’s Equity College archives captures one alumna’s strongly worded reaction to the announcement in which the alumna scolded the institution and accused it of “going the way of Vassar,” which she felt had made a “fool” of itself. In the present day, the faculty and administrators are likely as divided on the issue of co-education as they were in the 1960s. Certainly there is the perspective
that a single-sex environment deprives female students of the real-world experience co-existing with men that they will have to eventually face. A junior student described this criticism, explaining that people tell her that a women’s college is not representative of the real world and that the education is irrelevant in the twenty-first century. She said:

That's what I hear. You're … delusional for living in this place, and then you'll have to unlearn everything you did for four years to function again. It's a blunt way of saying that your education is … irrelevant in the 21st century. Women's education mattered when women couldn't get educated elsewhere, but today, when there are colleges and universities that are majority co-ed, why would you still to choose to go to a women's college? And how are you going to react when you have to work with men for the rest of your life? And there was a point when I was concerned about that, too, and that stressed me out. But I think something I've learned from being here is that I can back up my own ideas and voice them and not feel scrutinized by men or feel like professors are taking the men in the class more seriously. And I know that I can excel and I can challenge myself, and then I can handle leadership positions as a woman that no other man could do because there's no other man to do it. … Being in the single-sex environment … might not be right for everyone, but it's definitely right for me because I needed to become more confident, to become more well-spoken, to be candid about what I wanted out of my education, and to seek it out here, somewhere small enough and safe enough to do that. And academically, no one is really permitted to fail. There is always a dean reaching out to you or a peer reaching out to you, at the very least, and always opportunities to improve. And it's not handholding … ’cause you have to definitely show that you're willing to take on the challenges that you're … faced with at Women’s Equity College.
These comments are typical of the students who attend WEC. A widely held criticism of a women’s college education is that a single-sex women’s college education will not prepare its graduates for the real world because the absence of men will result in a sub-par education. This junior, like many others, concluded that she has excelled and developed her talents to a greater extent than she might have otherwise because of the absence of men. These students contend that the contemporary relevance of a single-sex education is obvious, but women cannot know it until they experience it.

The commitment to a single-sex environment seemed to be most prevalent and consistent among current students, but more varied among faculty and administrators. The students seemed to be best-positioned to see the value of the historical mission at play in the contemporary setting. Students consistently and strongly argued the importance of an all-female environment, with one student expressing her belief that alumnae would roll over in their graves if WEC were to become a co-ed institution. To some extent, this perspective is probably true, but certainly is not held by all alumnae. In fact, the director of the alumnae association even expressed the sense that while some alumnae were unsupportive of the idea of co-education, others seemed supportive. A number of administrators and some faculty expressed similar sentiments. One administrator pointed out that the differences in opinion have likely existed for decades, and he is correct. Memory of these differences of opinion has been preserved in WEC archival materials that document the variety of opinions on co-education held by senior students and alumnae over the years.

Some members of the organization felt that Women’s Equity College should go co-ed due to their feeling that the single-sex model is both outdated and contradicts the institution’s espoused value of diversity. One senior administrator explained:
I'm not sure it's a growing number but it's a significant minority, which in tough financial times becomes a loud minority … who say, "We are a thing of the past." We cannot talk about diversity and say we're diverse when we're excluding half the population.

This comment communicates the ambivalence of faculty who teach at WEC. Many of them came to the institution not for its mission of educating women but because of the job opportunity. Like students, they may perceive the value of the single-sex mission to be greater after having served on the faculty for years, but because their livelihood depends on the college staying open, they may be more easily swayed by arguments for co-education at times of financial challenge or financial crisis.

Another reason some members of WEC feel that the college should go co-ed is that they believe they may generate more revenue by either opening up undergraduate admissions to men and women or by beginning to offer some college preparation or graduate programs that would be open to both men and women. However, as some participants pointed out, including a senior-level leader, this strategy is not guaranteed to solve the college’s financial problems. This administrator explained that it is likely there would be a minimum of a fifteen-year lag before any additional revenues from co-education would make any significant difference. She summed up the feeling among some faculty who believe that WEC should enroll both women and men, saying:

There are people who believe that co-education is something that we should consider because it will bring us more students with a higher ability to pay, and I'm not sure that's actually true. … It will bring us a blip of more students perhaps, but there are lots more women going to college these days than men. It's hard to find those men.
This comment highlights how the extreme stress on the institution’s financial viability has pushed the college to consider institutional activities that are inconsistent with its historical mission.

The college has had to explore creative ways of generating revenue. Concerns have become great enough and have lasted long enough that the institution has created a formal structure for exploring the ways in which the college can maintain its mission while improving its market position. The pursuit and development of initiatives that can help the institution stay strong financially and are aligned with the institution’s mission constitute complementary program development. The administrator whose role at the institution is to oversee complementary development initiatives regularly investigates ways to help the college stay afloat financially by pursuing initiatives aligned with the institution’s mission. He explained the institution’s current approach to solving its market challenges:

It's all about thinking about what else Women’s Equity College can be in the world. But the way we talk about our motivations — the crass way — is we have a revenue problem and CPD is designed to address the revenue problem by generating revenue. The more nuanced and delicate way we talk about it in front of more-sensitive audiences, whether that’s faculty, students, or alums. The people who are affiliated with WEC care deeply about those values and that's the lens people tend to use. And so, in order to generate support for this kind of work, that's the kind of language we would use.

These comments point to the existing struggle at WEC for remaining financially viable while maintaining its single-sex composition and liberal arts focus. The college demonstrates its commitment to its historical mission by dedicating resources that focus on complementary development. However, because there is a real viability issue at stake, beyond a certain threshold the college will pursue initiatives that are inconsistent with its mission.
The complementary development administrator explained that members of the senior leadership have sometimes held the opinion, "The days of ‘better dead than co-ed’ are gone. But we're better alive than dead.” He went on to explain his own opinion on the matter, saying, “I had a lot of sympathy for that; you know, that we're not any good to anyone if we go out of business. So, no matter how noble our mission, we've got to keep the college going if we want to do any good in the world.”

By happenstance, at a time when the college was struggling financially, an international market of female students opened. As stated previously, for some students coming from abroad, a precondition for higher education is the single-sex environment. Enrollment of international women represents the most ideal alignment between Women’s Equity College’s historical mission and its efforts to promote complementary development initiatives. The supply of students provided a financial boon that was critical to the survival of WEC, and WEC has thus been vital to the advancement of global women in providing greater access to higher education for international students whose families will permit them to attend college on the condition that they enroll in a single-sex institution.

Another complementary development initiative aims to “expand the focus of women's education beyond the domestic sphere” and assists with the establishment of women’s colleges or program development within women’s colleges in the international community. The colleges are frequently located in cultures where women are treated as second-class citizens, and Women’s Equity College is deeply engaged in this work despite the tension between genders within some of these cultures and the Women’s Equity College culture and tradition of promoting gender equity. Community members frame this cultural negotiation as “cultural sensitivity.” In discussing one initiative based in Saudi Arabia, a junior faculty member in the social sciences said, “We are trying to work together in thinking about what role does a higher
education institution have in supporting the development of women in a way that is respectful of the particular culture in which the institution’s embedded.”

The work done with international women’s colleges provides administrators with a point of contrast about the status of women in the U.S. and women in other nations. A broad range of faculty and staff expressed support for WEC playing an advocacy role in public life given its single-sex mission. One administrator said:

Relatively speaking, things are not so bad in the U.S. We can still point to gender discrimination in many areas, so we cannot say that the war has been won. But relative to other places in the world, women outnumber men in higher education. It seems that it's probably just a matter of time as these generations of talented women move through the hierarchies of society; that we’re on the right track towards gender equity. When you look at other cultures, it's not so clear. … The pressing needs around women's education seem to be international and not domestic. We've always been global, but we've always served the majority U.S. students and we probably always will, but maybe 20 years ago, we started really internationalizing the student body, which is probably closer in some ways to the historical mission of this place in providing women opportunities who otherwise would not have had any opportunities. If a domestic young woman doesn't go to WEC, she'll probably go to another good school in the U.S. and be educated and it will be fine. There are women around the world who, if we don't take them and give them financial aid, will be uneducated. We are potentially, in many cases, their only chance to transform their lives, their families, their communities; that probably rings a little delusional and self-important, but I think it's true in a lot of cases. If you look at these applications, these are students who have stumbled onto WEC for whatever reason, and I'm sure other institutions have students like this in their pools, too, but I think we have
more just because of our historical role in these places. And the students we get from
around the world are incredible. I mean, they're so talented, so motivated, and we're
literally allowing them to redirect their lives. So I think we're deriving a lot of sense of
value in our mission from that these days.

These comments illustrate the importance of generating revenue in a way that is consistent with
the institution’s mission. Even better for this administrator was the satisfaction of the initiative
being a continuation of the historical commitment to broadening access to higher education for
women. A second point that emerges from these comments is the perception that U.S. women
have more equal standing to men than do women in other parts of the world. This perception is
important because the institutional leaders view some of their contribution to society as related to
the improvement of women’s position in the U.S.

Despite the belief among some that women and men are treated equally in the U.S., there
are plenty of present-day examples of public policy making that reflect the continuing disparity
that women in American society face. Take, for example, the various bills about women’s
reproductive rights (contraception and vaginal probe) that were passing through state
legislatures. Some administrators in marketing and alumnae relations expressed the relevance of
Women’s Equity College in that context. One noted, “There is not equity for females on the
planet yet in many, many ways. And I would say that until that happens, there is a place for
really high caliber women’s education.” While the debate is ongoing about the pros and cons of
single-sex education, there is continuing relevance of single-sex education even if the
explanation and rationale are difficult to describe. The director of the alumnae association
explained:

I think there are many more people who think there is gender equity and/or no need for
women's colleges, and yet, what we find so frequently is — and this has been over time,
it's been from many decades ago and continues — that once that woman who had no intention of going to a single-sex school comes here and has been here for even a short length of time, she stays because it's a women's college, which to me says that there is something extraordinarily relevant here that the rest of the world — the majority in the rest of the world — aren't aware of; that they can't understand the value until they get here and get to experience it. And then they really get it.

This administrator’s comments illustrate how many administrators and faculty understand the unique character of WEC. However, it cannot be known to students until they experience the institution’s unique environment.

Due in large part to WEC’s composition as a single-sex women’s college, there is great attunement to the women’s equity issues. The heightened awareness of disparities based on gender seemed to extend naturally to a heightened awareness of other individual characteristics such as race, class, and religion. The next section describes WEC’s engagement with other identity characteristics.

**Tensions Around Diversity**

As a historical antidote to gender inequity in higher education, the culture of Women’s Equity College has developed in such a way that its commitment to equity on gender issues has naturally extended to an espoused commitment to diversity on a number of other dimensions, particularly race and class. National data indicates that faculty at women’s colleges indicated higher levels of importance placed on enhancing students’ knowledge of and appreciation for other racial groups. They also showed higher ratings about their campuses respecting the expression of diverse values and beliefs. (See Appendix F and Appendix H for all results of t-tests.) The commitment is so pervasive throughout the college experience that one student expressed frustration with her sense that during her first year at Women’s Equity College, every
conversation led by staff, faculty, and administrators was about “race, then gender, then race, and
gender.” She was expressing her fatigue over being perpetually bombarded with conversations
about gender and race. With regard to class, Women’s Equity College has remained committed
to access for low-income students, though some students felt that class differences are not openly
discussed. Additionally, despite the widespread agreement about Women’s Equity College’s
espoused commitment to diversity and equity, members of the campus community had differing
perceptions about how well the WEC leadership facilitates effective dialogue about difference
and the extent to which the actions of community members reflect espoused values.

Again, most likely as a result of its early commitment to serving a marginalized
college, the culture of Women’s Equity College is such that liberal viewpoints dominate the
campus. Comparisons of faculty opinions at women’s colleges with all other colleges indicated
that the faculty at women’s colleges feel that their institutions place greater priority on helping
students learn how to bring about change in American society, to promote gender equity among
faculty, and to create a multicultural environment. Although there is widespread agreement about
this aspect of the Women’s Equity College culture and identity, a group of individuals tasked
with developing a strategic plan for the college struggled to write one paragraph that could
communicate the essence and the mission of the college. Some members of that appointed group
wished to clearly identify the school’s liberal nature, reasoning that prospective students should
be given an accurate picture of the environment in order to make informed decisions about
attending. Others felt strongly that they should not state that Women’s Equity College is a liberal
institution, lest such a statement deter more conservative students from applying or matriculating
at the institution. Although the distinctly liberal nature of Women’s Equity College is not
considered a “pride point” for the marketing department and the department does not advertise it,
many think that prospective students learn enough about the institution to instinctively
understand the liberal nature of the college. As described by a sophomore student, “The people that come to Women’s Equity College tend to be like-minded in this way,” a view shared widely across the college. However, some evidence, in fact, shows that conservative students come to WEC not recognizing the preponderance of liberal viewpoints at the institution.

The dominant discourse is that all types of women are welcome and accepted, and in comparison to other college campuses, Women’s Equity College probably does a much better job with its commitment to diversity. However, as one student put it, the reality for students seems to fall more in line with the statement, “We accept all [points of view on] all spectrums unless you’re from the right. A different student described the consequences of the liberal culture for some of her conservative student peers:

Unfortunately … what I have experienced is that there are students who are coming from conservative environments here. Most of them have to be tolerant of the liberals' way of thinking rather than the liberal thinking way being tolerant of them because they stand out. They stand out very easily. Like one of my friends, I love her and she's an amazing person. But her opinion in a group always stands out because it's always very different.

This second-year student was explaining how students, though not intolerant, were less accepting and perhaps not appreciative of conservative points of view. Her description of the Women’s Equity College environment offers some insight into how the college, while aware of its challenges related to the liberal nature of the environment, is either slow in trying to create a more inclusive environment or is not making an effort at all to change the environment. Her description stands as a testament to the inaction or slow response to the findings of a committee that was appointed to do a self-study on diversity at the institution. The commission found that conservative Christians on campus had much to say about not feeling a sense of belonging or inclusion at Women’s Equity College.
One student who would most likely have been among those who felt excluded is a student whom other students dubbed “Jesus Girl.” She was a devoted Christian who often stopped to pray publicly, sometimes in the midst of busy walkways. In exercising her religious faith on campus, “Jesus Girl” made large numbers of students uncomfortable. Students not only made fun of her behind her back, but they took issue with her being a science major and a person of faith. This situation illustrates the liberal hypocrisy on the part of some students.

At Women’s Equity College, students felt free to express their sexual identities. As described by one sophomore, Women’s Equity College has a “reputation for being a place of sexual exploration and experimentation.” This finding is consistent with national data that indicated that students had lower levels of agreement with the idea that there should be laws prohibiting same-sex relationships. Although the environment is very welcoming for students with regard to sexual orientation and gender identity, institutional leaders in some departments undercut that support. For instance, one member of the strategic planning group that was making an effort to write a paragraph that captured the essence of Women’s Equity College perceived that no one in the group ever talked about the large gay community at the college. She was struck by the omission given her understanding of the high percentage of students within the community who are gay. Another student described how the admissions office seems to avoid hiring students who present more masculine identities or whom they perceive to be overtly gay.

Students, themselves, send mixed messages about their level of comfort and acceptance about sexual identity in the language they use. Lesbians Until Graduation, or “LUGS,” is a term used to describe women who are perceived to be involved in same-sex relationships strictly only through graduation. Similarly, women who were seemingly straight upon arriving may be deemed “BUGS,” or Bisexual Until Graduation. The terminology about students’ experiences and identities has a derogatory tone.
There are also major tensions about race on campus. Even the physical layout of campus, with the racial and cultural houses located on the edges of the campus, seems to reflect the complicated culture around diversity at Women’s Equity College. Without meaning to, Women’s Equity College reproduces the issues related to center and margin by situating the homes of the different racial and ethnic minority groups far from the center of campus. Like many campuses, the organizational culture reflects a shortfall on the institution’s claims about diversity. For instance, for the last few years, Women’s Equity College has commemorated the matriculation of its first African-American student with a program that honors the achievements of one African-American alumna. Not only did the college fail to list the event on the general events calendar, but the administrator who was ultimately responsible for the event sent out an email announcement with only one or two days notice for the campus community.

Some students describe the Women’s Equity College culture in such a way that there seems to be a disconnect between Women’s Equity College’s emphasis on diversity and the reality of the environment, particularly the self-segregation that occurs among different groups within the community: international and domestic students, and students of color and White students. One student expressed her sense that Women’s Equity College draws boundaries around communities when it doesn’t have to and that the effect is divisive.

The long-standing tradition of offering a rigorous liberal arts education means that in order to succeed at Women’s Equity College, the ideal incoming student has a strong academic foundation from which to begin her Women’s Equity College studies. Some administrators and faculty feel that “getting a strong class” is a priority. Commonly used measures and indicators of an academically strong class are usually standardized test scores and GPAs, and because low-income students and students of color frequently have lower scores, the idea of getting a strong class is a position that is philosophically at odds with Women’s Equity College’s historical
commitment to providing access to higher education for students—women—who have been historically excluded. The internal struggle over commitment to access and equity while maintaining a concern about the quality of the student body is embodied in the struggle to name a group of incoming, academically high-achieving students who were given a special label and moniker that included the word “scholar.” The creation of the designation and program served as an incentive used for recruitment, marketing, and yield.

The concern about the quality of the student body manifests in unexpected ways and is captured in one retiring faculty member’s assertion that the quality of the student body has “gone down a bit.” Other faculty communicated their concerns about student preparedness when discussing the amount of time they put into supporting underprepared students. Some faculty seek to address this issue by putting in additional time and effort to help students with their writing, thinking, and speaking abilities. Additionally, some faculty invest additional time in students through their thoughtful advising, informal counseling, and mentoring of students. Some faculty members read multiple drafts of students’ work and give them extensive feedback and suggestions for improvement. One associate professor, in explaining the complexity of the issues related to student preparedness, suggested the link between race and educational inequity, saying:

One of the challenges for the college is to really deal with that and name it in a way that doesn't name some students as deficient. Name it and resolve it. And I see us kind of cycling through being willing to pay attention to that; and often that being willing to pay attention to it comes after some moment of student strife. They often don't name it as the inequity in their preparation. People will read it in different ways. Sometimes it's racism. … But to respond to it takes a lot of effort; it takes time. So part of the way that I respond to that, I require … a lot of writing in my classes. In my survey class, with 35-40 students
in it, there's a paper due every week and people turn them in on Sunday night, and then I grade them all before 8:30 Monday morning and I hand them all back, every week. And the way it works is there's eight papers; you have to turn them all in, but I only count the top five grades. So you can get an F, a D, a C-, a B-, a B+, an A, A, A and you've got an A- in my class even though you started out getting a D. If you look at my grading book for those classes, there are the well-educated ones who go from B’s to A’s. But then a lot of the class goes from D’s to C’s to B’s to A’s.

Because this faculty member was not alone in her active efforts to support academically underprepared students, these comments provided insight into WEC’s broader institutional commitment to the academic success of students that other colleges may be less committed to supporting.

There was also a sense of uneasiness about the way the college represents itself. A handful of students of color described their sense of being exploited for marketing purposes. They felt that the college plastered their faces all over web pages and other marketing materials. Students also felt that one of the college’s yield events, which was a weekend of activities designed specifically for admitted students of color, was misleading to the invited groups. A few students felt that the college did not meet the expectations the students of color developed during admitted students weekend.

Additionally, the college proudly boasts the statistic that one in three women are women of color or international students, a statistic which is unclear but seems to be intended to promote the image that the college is racially diverse. The claim may sound impressive, but upon closer examination, it becomes obvious the college is seeking to give an impression that it is more racially and ethnically diverse than it is in actuality. This marketing strategy is another indicator
of the institution’s perception of the importance of appearing to be diverse to external populations, including prospective students and parents.

WEC, with its liberal, progressive orientation and its generally broad commitment to equity, supports the success of students whom faculty and administrators perceive might not succeed elsewhere. The espoused and embedded values manifest in the institution’s approach to diversity, though there are tensions that result. Still, WEC purports to value differences, and in the way WEC engages the world beyond campus boundaries, it demonstrates this commitment. In this way, WEC as a case study illustrates the limitations of second wave feminism, which has been critiqued by scholars such as bell hooks (1984) and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) for its exclusion of the experiences of women of color and the assumption that all women’s experiences are the same. The challenges and tensions it faces with regard to diversity have a connection to the large numbers of elite and privileged students historically and contemporarily served by the institution. The next section describes how WEC serves communities other than the local and global communities of women and how engagement results in service to other marginalized groups.

**Community and Purposeful Engagement**

Community engagement at Women’s Equity College strengthens the historical mission of the institution. WEC’s mission statement declares the importance of purposeful engagement with the world and directs the college’s curricular and co-curricular program toward providing students with the skills and desire to engage effectively. A senior administrator explained that Women’s Equity College wants students to learn that purposeful engagement “isn’t just doing good in a kind of … patronizing way. … It’s making your way in the world and developing enough leadership and enough influence, in whatever you do, that you can give back in some ways.” Purposeful engagement broadens the institution’s historical mission by reinforcing the
concept that service to low-income communities may be a more holistic way of addressing the needs of women in local communities and the needs of Women’s Equity College students in terms of leadership development.

Few participants could state the institution’s mission or identify key phrases from the mission, yet despite lack of familiarity with the institutional mission, most participants could point to an ethos and experience that reflected an active and pervasive mission. Many community members perceived the mission of the college to be facilitation of the development of individuals who are critically aware and able to question the conditions of their environment. They maintained that a Women’s Equity College education could be a platform from which students and alumnae could jump headfirst into becoming agents of change. Yet even though the mission may be unfamiliar to some, for others, the mission is a beacon. One faculty member said, “You know, we don’t have all the answers and we don’t get it all right, but I feel like there’s a real commitment to trying to figure out what it means to be a sort of high-functioning microcosm of society and to really take your evolution as an institution seriously in that regard.”

For some, but certainly not all, campus members, the Women’s Equity College mission statement provides the meta-narrative that helps a decentralized organization like a college to operate smoothly and cohesively. Participants who were more skeptical about the meaningfulness of mission statements expressed their sense that one can interpret mission statements in whatever ways are most useful. Administrators use the mission statement to manage the institutional culture and often point to it in explaining decision-making regarding recruitment, hiring, admissions, and strategic planning. Many administrators are “brokers on the edge of the institution, talking to prospective students, talking to the external world, representing the internal world.”
The college’s mission statement, while it connotes an egalitarian value, does not overtly state a commitment to addressing inequity according to one senior administrator. She noted that the mission statement is unlikely to ever include such language because it would be “off-putting” to more conservative students. However, most faculty and administrators would agree with her sentiment that “it is what they teach our students to do. It is what they do in the classroom. It is what they do in the co-curricular life. It’s a huge array of co-curricular activities that are heavily about confronting inequities.”

The reference to “purposeful engagement” captures the key goal of “preparing students to be true citizens of the world,” a faculty member explained. Citizenship is viewed as having an activist element rather than being merely participatory. In other words, it is not sufficient to engage directly with communities. There must be an intent to create change in a liberal or progressive direction, ideally on some social, political, or economic issue. Coupled with the institutional values that have developed and persisted over time, the nature of the activism promoted by the center has an obvious progressive, liberal stance.

WEC demonstrates the institution’s commitment to purposeful engagement through formal organizational structures that promote community engagement. One of the major campus centers articulates its goals as cultivating students’ commitment to civic and public life, helping students engage critically with important contemporary issues, and understanding how women can create positive change in the world. The center’s director feels that the organization makes a unique contribution to students’ educational experiences by getting students out of classrooms and into community organizations. As students “learn to help” through the programs based on the center, the center effectively contributes to the mission of the college.

One of the three branches of the center that seeks to help students understand the contemporary relevance of a liberal arts education houses the institution’s community-based
learning (CBL) opportunities. According to the head of this branch, the desired outcome of student participation in the community-based learning center is that students will “understand that being a citizen in society requires showing up and being present in the community. And that’s kind of a threshold goal … but … they’re not all interested in going that far.” In this way, the flavor of student engagement differs from earlier eras when student engagement was essentially student activism. One student/administrator joked that students’ approach to activism is characterized by the notion, “I’ll be a radical in my spare time.”

The center director encourages students to see themselves as “agents of campus-community partnership” who provide “capacity-building functions for the organizations” with which they work. Additionally, the community-based learning center promotes an asset-based approach to community development. One student explained, “Rather than looking at community needs, an asset-based approach means looking at what they already have and using those resources … to revitalize and reorganize.” The community-based learning center also takes a partnership approach to its work. An administrator closely affiliated with the center explained the need to be careful about the idea of students “doing good” in the community. He described the partnership model as one in which “the college, the local schools, local NGOs, even local governments can work effectively together to accomplish goals that they share.” The CBL director’s pedagogical approach to his work with students takes into account the possibility that bringing Women’s Equity College students into deep engagement with underrepresented and disadvantaged communities could reinforce stereotypes. Some students hold a missionary, charitable view of community engagement, and the center director prompts them to:

Query it and interrogate it. … What I think of my educational cycle is: questioning it, getting them to think about empowerment and then what an empowerment model would mean for the way in which they work toward addressing social problems or issues. And
then to come back and value the charity motive all over again, renewed by this enhanced critical perspective, because being motivated by charity itself isn’t a bad thing. Having a charity model that doesn’t question the causes of underlying social problems is a problem for me. As an educator, I want to get them through a cycle of critique and renewal about that.

This administrator’s comments reflected his philosophy of imparting an approach to community engagement that focuses on helping communities to empower themselves. The alternative is to impose outside ideas about what is best for a community, an approach that WEC dissuades.

When community-based learning is effective, students develop sophisticated perspectives about their potential to be agents of social change. One student explained how her work with the community-based learning program taught her the inherent value of community engagement and the importance of becoming an agent of change. She stressed that her involvement taught her the “very important stuff of following through and replacing myself and transferring skills.” She went on to say, “I think one of the most important aspects of our … leadership lingo at Women’s Equity College has been that you don’t lead alone; that you aren’t just some kind of idol on a pedestal. You need to train and you need to transfer, and that’s the most important aspect of being a leader.”

Leadership development is one of the ideal outcomes of community-based learning at Women’s Equity College. A senior administrator explained that when a student develops “a kind of engaged leadership,” she is “going to go out and make things better for people, not necessarily make things better by inventing a new car or something, but make things better for human beings. … It’s gendered a little bit. This is what women do. … It’s very relational.”

The notion of “community” at Women’s Equity College is multi-dimensional but, as described by one student, can be a group “large or small, working together in some way toward a
common goal. … Within that community, you can have smaller ones.” In the context of the community-based learning center, community comprises the local areas adjacent or near campus. However, the community that Women’s Equity College prioritizes first is the campus community of students. The head of the center in which WEC’s community-based learning organization is housed expressed this priority in terms of the practicality. He said, “We have to serve the campus before we serve the community.” The college must first “contribute to the academic mission of the college.”

The final dimension of community that some participants described was the global community. Sometimes they referred to “all the people of the world” and sometimes only the global community of women.

Participants fully agreed that Women’s Equity College provides high levels of service to and engagement with the campus and local communities; however, they disagreed about the extent to which Women’s Equity College serves the global community of women. One student explained that having a lot of international students and sending a lot of students abroad generates some global awareness and global-mindedness, but “being aware of the globe is different than serving … the globe and … being engaged in that way.” Others felt that “going … around the globe is very much in our blood,” and that new initiatives such as partnering with the remaining Seven Sisters colleges and the State Department for a Global Women’s Summit demonstrate Women’s Equity College’s effort to be purposefully engaged in the global community.

Effective promotion of purposeful engagement is not without its challenges. For instance, students who participate in CBL programs are predominantly White and upper middle class. Student leaders in the CBL express concern that these students may not be developmentally prepared to engage with local communities without doing harm. Another challenge is that
because WEC successfully facilitates an ethic of care, an orientation to engage purposefully with communities, and the skills to do so, many alumnae choose careers that make the alumnae base less affluent than the alumnae at some of the more prominent women’s colleges. As a result, the level at which alumnae can provide financial support to the institution is modest.

Finally, there is some sense that the college is rather selective in the way it structures community-based learning opportunities. One student explained that WEC students do not go to the poorest neighborhoods and communities around the college. She felt that the college encourages engagement with “the best poor people around, like the cleanest ones and the ones that are the smartest of the stupid.” In limiting the range of opportunities for risk-management purposes, the college puts the perceived needs of the students ahead of the needs of the community.

Despite challenges, the educational program at Women’s Equity College emphasizes the importance of improving other people’s lives in ways that are directly relevant to the people served — in a way that makes sense. Students leave “not thinking about just improving something, but also thinking about changing the social structure that actually causes these disparities … a lot of social inequalities, problems like that.”

**Concluding Points**

Women’s Equity College continues its historical mission of providing a high-quality educational experience to women in a single-sex environment. One of the unique and distinctive contributions that WEC makes to society is the education of women who pursue graduate degrees in sciences or who become professionals or leaders on the national stage. WEC continues its legacy of broadening access to higher education in enrolling international female students. The emergence of the international market of female students was aligned with the institution’s mission and provided temporary reprieve from impending financial crisis. The
institution will have to make difficult strategic decisions in the near future about either cutting costs or generating revenue in ways that may be inconsistent with the mission in order to remain financially viable.

Women’s Equity College faces major market challenges as both a liberal arts college and women’s college. There is a steadily decreasing demand for a liberal arts education and for a single-sex women’s college education. Trends reflect the increasing pressure to professionalize postsecondary education as well as the changing perceptions of the value of a women’s college education. Unfortunately, it is difficult, if not impossible, for prospective students to understand the unique learning environment that exists at a women’s college.

Without a doubt, issues of equity are foregrounded in the WEC experience. Students are regularly confronted with difficult dialogues about race, class, and gender. Although there are some challenges in the way that WEC responds to low-income students, racial minorities, and lesbian and transgendered students, WEC demonstrates a real commitment to actively valuing difference. Not only do faculty make extra efforts to help academically underprepared students succeed, but they recognize that the necessity for remedial education is often grounded in inequalities that students experienced prior to arriving at WEC. The institutional values and understanding of equity transmit to community-based learning work and career choices.

Finally, a critical part of the institution’s efforts to developing female leaders is the emphasis on connecting liberal arts with citizenship and the efforts to instill in students a sense of social responsibility through community-based learning. Administrators and faculty employ an empowerment model in their approach to community-based learning and community engagement. The result of WEC’s community engagement is service to other marginalized populations, such as the many low-income families in the surrounding area. In this one way, in
an effort to advance the needs and interests of the local and global community of women, WEC promotes purposeful engagement that crosses boundaries of gender and class.
CHAPTER SEVEN

A CASE STUDY OF CHRISTIAN KINGDOM COLLEGE

This chapter presents the findings from Christian Kingdom College (CKC), an interdenominational, liberal arts college affiliated with the evangelical Christian tradition. Members of CKC come out of the neo-evangelicalism of Billy Graham, and according to a senior administrator, a Christian has “a saving personal relationship with Christ and embraces Christ as a Savior.” The college mission, then, seeks to facilitate an environment that “fosters the core faith conviction,” and there could be “no greater failure that could occur than that a person walk away and not be a Christian as a result of their education.” The first part of this chapter provides a historical and cultural narrative of CKC, presenting the general information about the college, distinctive characteristics of evangelical Christians that influence the institution’s culture, and institutional practices of selecting new members and the standards to which they are held upon entry. The next section describes how the religious identity of the institution influences the ethos around the search for knowledge and scientific inquiry and faculty’s experiences of teaching and research at the institution. The third section describes how CKC provides institutional leadership to other colleges within its niche group, and, in part because of its position as an institutional leader, how it emerges as a centrist actor in relation to which other institutions define themselves. The fourth section describes how CKC addresses gender roles and same-sex relationships in light of its Biblical orthodox traditions. The final section describes how CKC defines community and engages in community in a way that supports its mission of integrating faith and learning, doing so for the broader purpose of serving Christ and Christ’s kingdom.

The Historical and Cultural Narrative of Christian Kingdom College

Christian Kingdom College is a four-year, private, nonprofit college located in a large,
wealthy Midwestern suburb, just far enough from the nearest metro area that getting into the city requires planning and effort. There are 2,400 undergraduate students and 600 graduate students enrolled at CKC, which awards bachelor’s degrees in over 40 areas of study, along with master’s degrees in at least one dozen areas and two options for doctoral studies. Approximately 81 percent of the student population is White, 4 percent Asian, 4 percent Latino, 4 percent African American, 2 percent multi-racial, 1 percent unknown, and 1 percent nonresident alien. The male to female ratio is 1:1. Full-time faculty number 198, with an additional 93 faculty members serving in a part-time capacity. As a result, the ratio of students to faculty is 12:1. Of the 66 tenure-track faculty, 22 are women; and of the 52 full professors, 8 are women.

The annual cost of attending CKC is roughly $28,000-$36,000 for tuition and $8,000 for room and board. If one counts the $10,000 automatic subsidy contributed by the institution, the actual cost of one year of education at CKC is $46,000-$54,000. As is the case at many liberal arts colleges, the population of CKC tends to be largely middle and upper class. Additionally, because of its religious affiliation and its conditions for enrollment and employment, the population is reportedly entirely Christian. Although nationally the Christian population is racially diverse, the number of students of color who attend CKC is limited. CKC is so racially homogenous that as part of its identity, it is perceived to be a Predominantly White Institution. The student body is, therefore, marked by racial and socioeconomic homogeneity.

There is widespread agreement that the admissions office struggles in its efforts to become more racially diverse. The analysis of faculty data supported this perspective. Compared to other institutions, CCCU faculty indicated lower levels of perception that their institution prioritized creating a diverse multicultural campus environment. Admissions struggled with what one faculty member described as “competing visions of what multicultural admissions should look like and what kind of student of color fits in at Christian Kingdom College — basically,
culturally middle-class suburbanite, very familiar with White culture.” She went on to say, “We don’t have very many kinds of Malcolm X types on campus. That’s something we’re kind of missing.” Her characterization of the small percentage of Black students on campus seemed to reveal a perception about African Americans within the campus community: perhaps that African Americans are militant activists with an agenda of achieving racial equality by any means necessary.

By a variety of external evaluators, CKC has a reputation for providing a rigorous liberal arts education. Entering students are well-prepared academically. Many faculty are competitive for positions at other institutions where research is highly valued. The institution is highly regarded among liberal arts colleges more generally, a circumstance that gives the institution even greater standing within its niche group of evangelical Christian colleges.

CKC’s membership in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities makes the college accountable to a governing organization. Member organizations vest the CCCU with authority to establish standards and requirements of all member organizations. In this way, the CCCU helps to maintain continuity within the 118 Christian colleges and universities that are members. According to its website, the CCCU’s mission is “to advance the cause of Christ-centered education and to help our institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth.” Some members of the college community feel that this type of accountability helps deepen the sense of community in that CKC is part of a larger family of Christian institutions of higher learning.

The CCCU has helped promote uniform standards among Christian institutions of higher learning. However, within Christian culture there have been a great many subdivisions. Most relevant to CKC was the split that occurred between Fundamentalists and Modernists at the turn of the century. Fundamentalist Christianity has taken a more conservative position on religious,
social, and political concerns, whereas one faculty member noted, “Evangelical Christianity is a more distinct place in the middle,” meaning that the institution is generally more moderate than fundamentalist Christian institutions and more conservative than mainline Christian institutions. A student offered another perspective on evangelism, explaining that its basis is “sharing the good news, the fact that we are broken, that we have a Savior that died for us and he is real, and that he’s going to one day redeem us.” This principle serves as the backbone of CKC’s mission.

The religious tenets of evangelical Christianity have exerted a great deal of influence on the institutional practices and procedures of CKC. The college has taken the position of having what many campus members describe as “unity” with regard to essential theological issues, but it takes “liberty” when it comes to non-essential theological issues. This approach has created tension with external parties. Being more liberal on “extra-biblical” issues can elicit negative responses from peer Christian institutions, whereas being more unified on theological issues can lead to friction with secular institutions.

Consistent with evangelical Christian principles, the college’s mission is about developing whole and effective Christians through the integration of faith and learning, with the purpose of doing it all for Christ and his kingdom. Becoming a whole and effective Christian has to do with one’s internal character and the external practice of living out one’s faith in every area of one’s life. A senior institutional leader shared his perspective on the phrase “becoming whole and effective,” explaining that being “whole” refers to “becoming the person that God intends you to be.” He indicated a belief that the most pivotal question for every human being is the question by Catholic thinker and leader Pope John Paul II, “Am I going to choose to be the person that I am or am I going to be the person that I ought to be?” For him and many others at Christian Kingdom College, becoming whole occurs through a transformative process, which can happen concurrently with a college education.
Another perspective on the phrase “whole and effective Christian” is that wholeness is tantamount to perfection, which means that anything not perfect is broken. As a result, the mission of developing whole, or “perfect,” Christians translates into pressure to be perfect, and as described by one associate professor, to feel that they “can’t let people see or know or even imagine that [they] sin.” Students strongly embrace this particular aspect of the greater evangelical Christian culture, with nearly every student talking about brokenness, a finding that reflects the strength of the influence that Christian beliefs have on the students who matriculate at Christian Kingdom College.

Yet, this aspect of student culture is frustrating to some students, with one student sharing this sentiment in asserting that the brokenness is not honest, it is “theatrical”; and the widespread discussions arise from a shared perception among students that it’s “cool to be broken.” Regardless of that perception, students generally agreed that the search for wholeness, which begins with the recognition of being fallible, contributes to a living and learning environment that feels judgmental and overly critical.

Current members of Christian Kingdom College do not feel that they hide or soft pedal the institution’s Christian roots or identity. As described by one faculty member, they practice “truth in advertising.” Faculty and administrators agree that it is critical for the institution to foreground its mission in all of its exchanges with external parties. One administrator explained, “When you become embarrassed about your mission, hide your mission, blunt your mission, you contribute to mission drift.” The institution’s motto, paraphrased as doing all things for Christ and the kingdom, permeates all aspects of the organization’s culture. The slogan appears on virtually every web page and in most college publications. Nearly all members of the community who participated in the study referenced the phrase in their descriptions of the institution’s mission and identity.
By design, all members of CKC must profess to being Christians. Hiring practices and the student admission process ensure that all new members of CKC share this characteristic. Faculty and staff are carefully vetted and must sign a statement of faith upon accepting employment. One senior administrator explained that CKC is “extraordinarily scrupulous in how they try to screen and evaluate, and exercise prayerful concern” in their hiring practices because faculty and staff “embody the heart of the school.” They are the ones whose engagement with students will have the greatest influence on all aspects of the students’ development. Additionally, faculty who accept academic jobs at CKC must also produce at least one peer-reviewed publication that ties one’s academic expertise to Christian principles. Integration is easier in some fields than others, but to earn tenure, all faculty must eventually meet this expectation. Faculty reinforce the mission through their interactions with and commitment to students outside the classroom. One example is a weekly Mennonite Dinner, which one student described as a “hybrid model of learning in social context.” This weekly gathering is a decades-old tradition, which is not intended to evangelize the Mennonite faith, but instead brings together forty to fifty students who share a meal and engage in discussions of theology, peace, justice, stewardship, and poverty, all frequently led by faculty.

Prospective students must submit testimonies articulating their faith in Jesus as part of their undergraduate admission materials, and those who matriculate must then sign the community covenant. The covenant is considered to be a social compact among the members of the campus community. It is a tool to help those individuals fulfill the community’s purpose of living according to biblical standards and living lives that are dedicated to the service of Jesus Christ. By one administrator’s estimation, only 5 percent of the covenant is about abstaining from the use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and sex, but he also felt that students sometimes seem most concerned about this aspect of the covenant. These things garner much national and
international attention and also capture the imagination of the general public. There is a public fascination with the expectation that CKC’s traditional-aged college students abstain from the use of alcohol and drugs, sex, and dancing.

Rather than list a set of behaviors that are encouraged or prohibited at CKC, the statement of faith and the community covenant outline what administrators refer to as the “essentials” and to which members of the community often look for guidance. As stated on the college website, the purposes of the community covenant are fourfold. The covenant is intended to cultivate a culture that encourages spiritual, moral, and intellectual growth. It is intended to integrate faith and devotion into campus members’ lives. It is intended to provide guidance in removing obstacles to meeting the calling to be Christ-centered. And, finally, it is intended to promote the view that dependence on God and obedience to biblical orthodoxy is required for living a life that is in service to Christ.

The other main part of the mission is about integrating faith and learning. Students, administrators, and faculty who participated in this study were well-versed in the institution’s central objective of integrating faith and learning. The encouragement of academic pursuits within a Christian worldview permeated their experiences. Faculty, administrators, and students expressed confidence and pride in the college’s academic reputation among evangelical Christian institutions and, to some extent, among all liberal arts colleges. The high degree of coherence, in institutional actors’ understanding and execution of both parts of the mission can be attributed to the shared religious identity among campus community members, which helps to unite the college community.

When describing any aspect of student life at CKC, one student explained that “everything from living in the dorms to the academics to the athletics—all these things build us and build your character in order to have an influence and fulfill your role within the greater
kingdom.” Daily required chapel attendance helps students build up their faith, much the way regular exercise of any sort can build cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, or flexibility. Of course, some students view mandatory chapel attendance cynically, referring to it as “chapeltisement” because of the promotional aspect it takes on when members of the campus community use the venue as a way to advertise their programs and services.

The numerous small Bible study groups elicit a parallel set of reactions to those of the required daily chapel attendance. Many students belong to one or more small groups. Although many students expressed a sense of belonging and positive experiences learning from peers, there is a sense that small groups are somewhat superficial. One student described his membership in four small groups, each of which was associated with a different campus activity. Even though he regularly and consistently participated in these groups, this student was skeptical, perhaps even cynical, about the ability of participants to engage sincerely and deeply in multiple groups. He wondered whether the caring about others was insincere. He explained that the relationships that people have in small groups are surface level, but his peers frequently pretend those relationships are more significant than they are.

Given the institution’s mission of producing whole and effective Christians and the proliferation of mission-aligned academic structures and co-curricular activities, most members of the campus community feel strongly that institutions like CKC are needed in the world. One senior administrator explained, “We want to be a self-perpetuating community that takes in students and cultivates them and sends them out to do good things in the world.” A faculty member felt that the world is “not exactly overrun with people of high character,” and that because CKC produces whole and effective Christians who “desire to do their jobs well and with integrity” and are “people with character,” the college makes an obvious contribution to the public good. There are many Christians in the world; however, as argued by one student,
irresponsible Christianity is all around. To emphasize her point, she wondered aloud how many U.S. presidents have been Christian and how many of them have truly enacted economics according to Jesus? In offering a rigorous education, CKC helps students to develop the competencies to become leaders in a variety of fields after they graduate. However, despite the good done within the immediate environment, one could take the perspective of a faculty member in arguing that, “Christian Kingdom College is the incidental. The actual purpose of what we’re doing here is for Christ and for his kingdom.” This faculty member aptly captured one of the points of friction that results from CKC’s religious roots: whether the college fosters learning for learning’s sake or for the sake of an educated citizenry, or whether it fosters learning for the clear, but indirect, goal of building Christ’s kingdom. Depending on one’s standpoint, the kingdom of Christ might be viewed as a community that privileges certain populations over others and, on occasion, at the expense of certain populations’ civil rights.

**Religious Roots and The Pursuit of Knowledge and Truth**

As described by many members of the campus community, Christians are expected to be salt, light, and yeast—in other words, agitators—to challenge the assumptions and foundations of the world. As described by one student, Christians are “called to be distinct and sojourners, aliens within the place that they live.” Their self-proclaimed foreignness indicates how they see themselves as being separate from the world. Some faculty noted that by its nature, Christianity itself has always been “out of step” with the times and out of step with the world, due to its traditional position of being distinct from the world. However, to rectify the sense of separation, evangelical Christianity emerged in the 1940s and 1950s when a split occurred between the Fundamentalists and Modernists. Billy Graham, a prominent Christian leader, diverged from the Fundamentalists because, as one faculty member explained, Graham viewed the role of Christianity as “being in the world and not separate from it, and being centrist and willing to talk
to various conversation partners instead of thinking that it would be polluting; and that legacy is at Christian Kingdom College … in a real way.” This comment points to a desire for CKC to pursue its mission in a way that is relevant to the contemporary world.

Another faculty member explained an opposing perspective on how Christians view culture and, implicitly, society. She indicated a “funny” relationship between the two, noting that Christians “tend to think of culture as something out there, something bad, something against which we kind of pose ourselves. So we are always countercultural, which then leaves many Christians feeling like we should be sort of a-cultural or trans-cultural … ‘We are just Christians and then there are these cultural people out there.’” These ideas about Christians being separate from the world, separate from culture, sets up an “us versus them” mentality. This oppositional sort of positioning may prevent Christians from being effective social or cultural change agents. As noted by some faculty, being out of step with the times was, in another time period, a point of pride for Christians because being out of step was akin to taking a critical position on current issues. However, as noted by one associate professor, evangelical Christians’ current positions on social, cultural, and political issues, as dictated by the Christian faith, now seem less out of step and more behind the times.

Although Christian Kingdom College split from the Fundamentalists in the 1940s, many individuals frequently assume that CKC is a fundamentalist Christian institution, which leads to certain expectations regarding CKC’s policies and practices. Members of CKC are highly attuned to public perceptions about Christian higher education being anti-intellectual, discriminatory, or closed-minded. One faculty member explained that the “instinct that religion is the enemy of truth is really deeply embedded in academia generally.” Part of the tension also has a history in Christians’ attitudes about higher education. These individuals wonder whether education is the best priority for a Christian, and though this type of questioning may not be
“intended to be anti-intellectual,” it can be interpreted that way. Rather than a general anti-intellectual sentiment, the issue may be more about Christians’ concern with “how the particular temptations that can come along with intellectual pursuits can lead people away from taking their faith seriously … as if becoming more educated winds up being at war with being a person who’s faithful,” as one faculty member described.

The approach to reconciling scientific inquiry and learning taken by the universe of Christian colleges—fundamentalist, evangelical, and mainline Protestant—varies widely. When conflicts arise between literal interpretations of the Bible and scientific explanations for naturally occurring phenomena, some evangelical academics favor a biblical explanation such that religion trumps science. It is the world external to CKC that holds the negative view of Christian higher education. The standoff between science and religion that is implicit in Christian higher education can be more or less of a tension depending on the degree to which the leaders of a Christian institution feel the need to address the tension in order to be viewed as a legitimate place of learning. CKC navigates this tension as well as can be hoped. The most senior levels of leadership put great energy into thinking about the issue. One senior administrator explained that CKC’s epistemological position is located somewhere between complete objectivity and “all-consuming subjectivity.” He further noted:

We challenge this fundamental notion that either religion is the enemy of knowledge or, in the mind of many post-modernists, religion is just one of the many narratives and you have to especially be suspicious of the totalizing meta-narratives because they’re all only about power. … We believe that there is truth. We believe that such truth is shown preeminentantly in the person of Jesus Christ and the scriptures, but we believe that there’s a lot to try to understand about this complex world and that we have the opportunity to engage that in a charitable, open, correctable way with certain things that we take as
givens because they're taught in scripture.

These comments indicate that faculty and administrators at CKC believe that knowledge production and biblical orthodoxy are compatible. Still, members of the institutional leadership and many faculty are highly aware of the concerns that non-Christians have about the legitimacy of teaching and learning in a faith-based institution. Yet, as this senior administrator explained, leaders of the institution take the position that complete objectivity is impossible and complete subjectivity is not useful. He indicated that although the foundation for pursuing knowledge is scripture, scientific discoveries affect evangelical Christians’ interpretation of scripture. The references to being “self-perpetuating” and to “graduating students who will do good things in the world” reveal a desire to produce Christian thinkers who will then integrate faith in the work they do after graduation.

Creating the culture in which this can happen requires strong support from faculty. Approximately one-quarter of the faculty at CKC were alumni of the institution and have cultivated an understanding of the institution’s mission. One faculty member expressed that a major challenge within faculty culture is the pressure to show that you are “one of them.” Perhaps in order to demonstrate this point and to show their commitment to a Christian education, faculty sometimes begin class with a prayer; they may tell their students on the first day of class that they love Jesus, too; or they may elect to open their lives to students in ways that allow students to see what one faculty member describes as a life that is guided by Christian principles and that is also normal.

At the same time that faculty must address the question of their own faithfulness as scholars, faculty must also address the tension between the pursuit of serious scholarship and the tenets of the Christian faith along with its related culture. Faculty who present controversial ideas have differing levels of success at the institution, and success may have to do with the faculty
member’s fit, or more specifically, creating the perception of being “one of them.” Stories abound at the college about faculty members who leave or are essentially fired despite being devout and self-proclaimed Christians. The colleagues who remain at CKC suspect that the faculty members who depart are perceived to be too combative or perhaps even too secular — not committed enough to Christian principles. It is unclear exactly who makes the decisions about tenure or faculty contracts. One faculty member’s observance about a colleague’s departure from the college, despite departmental and faculty personnel committee’s support for the faculty member’s tenure application, was that, “It was at the level of the provost and the president that he lost his job.” Other times, it may be that faculty members leave of their own accord. One student recounted the story of a professor who was “definitely a rebel and was definitely pushing the envelope.” The student said, “I think he chose to leave the school last year, but that was his choice. I don’t think it was the school saying, ‘We don’t want you here.’ It was more … like, ‘I feel like this is not a great fit for me,’ and that’s what he told the students.” Working to meet two sets of standards—that of serious scholar and teacher and that of serious and committed Christian—means that faculty must find ways to mitigate the pressures.

At an institutional level, Christian Kingdom College enjoys a rich history and tradition of strong academics. This privilege allows the college to attract bright students and scholars, and in doing so, it can perpetuate its strong academic reputation. As noted by some institutional actors, in the earliest days of Christianity, some Christians were “agitators” to the common culture and, therefore, were out of step with the times. This tradition may translate into a current perception that Christians are anti-intellectual. Regardless, there is ongoing and felt external pressure for members of the college to justify that teaching and learning are worthy pursuits for Christians. At the same time, internal pressures from members of the college push teachers and learners at CKC to maintain an orthodoxy that may be out of step with the times or may be detrimental to a
rigorous academic environment. (Here, orthodox refers generally to correct interpretation of the Bible, whereas Orthodox generally refers to a specific Christian denomination.) The combination of competing internal and external pressures may require that institutional leaders provide strong leadership to its internal campus constituency in order to present a unified front to other Christian institutions and the general public. CKC is recognized as a leader within its peer group of institutions, and therefore it takes seriously how it approaches its most critical functions of teaching and learning within contemporary contexts.

The religious roots and identity permeate the entire campus culture. That CKC takes seriously its commitment to an evangelical Christian tradition is evident in the requirement that all members of the community profess their religious beliefs. The commitment is also evident in the institution’s requirements for tenure. Although CKC is proud of its Christian heritage, public perceptions create challenges for the institution in terms of legitimacy. While managing public perceptions, CKC must also meet expectations and standards from its peer institutions in the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities. The next section describes how institutional actors shape the college’s images and actions to meet these expectations.

**Institutional Leadership Among Christian Colleges and Universities**

Christian Kingdom College is one of the top Christian liberal arts colleges in the nation, and the institution works to maintain that position. CKC leaders concern themselves with maintaining a rigorous academic environment and maintaining biblical orthodoxy. The integration of faith and learning might be simpler if the college were not also concerned with being taken seriously in the academic world.

Members of CKC seek to be faithful to the institution’s biblical orthodox roots, and although they aim to exercise independent thought in their decision making, leaders are still responsive to competing forces. In one direction, the institution must address market concerns.
Faculty and administrators recognize that CKC is part of an institutional marketplace, and therefore, competes with non-Christian and Christian institutions alike. An anthropology professor explained, “We are shaped by that sort of market reality and we try to do that in a way that’s theologically responsible and commensurate with our identity as Christians, but it is not the same thing.” The likelihood of attracting non-Christian students is low, but the possibility of finding students with a nominal commitment to the Christian faith is much more likely. If the institution is successful in its mission, those students might become more faithful and active Christians and help build the kingdom of God. It is thus critical for the institution to be mindful of its position in the marketplace.

From another direction, the college experiences pressure to be more conservative in its practice. Some of that pressure comes from students who express concern when their faculty present ideas that seem inconsistent with Christian principles or perhaps contradict them altogether. One student gave an example of a peer who transferred due to his dissatisfaction with how his professors integrated faith and learning, and described his friend’s specific interactions within an English class. The student who ultimately transferred acknowledged that his faculty presented material through a Christian lens, but the student felt that the professor “minimalized other aspects of it” and were not addressing key issues. Although he engaged in satisfying one-on-one follow-up conversations with his faculty member outside of class, the student knew that he could not meet with a professor two hours each day to discuss significant disagreements about material, and thus he elected to transfer. The student eventually transferred out of CKC to a secular institution.

Christian Kingdom College has become a leader within its niche group and serves as a point of reference for other institutions of higher learning. The college also experiences criticism from other Christian institutions, and the effect over time seems to be what some faculty dubbed
a “fear of ambiguity” about its Christian identity and roots. This fear manifests in the way CKC manages its image within a national academic culture that is suspicious of religion. According to a professional in student activities, the college “dresses itself up, buttons itself up,” publicizing the accomplishments of its members on a broad scale. The college’s marketing and publicity around CKC’s accomplishments meets the institution’s “truth in advertising” standard, referenced earlier; publicity also serves to help illustrate to the outside world how the college remains true to its evangelical Christian identity.

Among CKC faculty and administrators, there is a sense that the college is centrist in the evangelical world, falling somewhere near the middle in balancing conservatism and liberalism. An administrator explained that CKC seems to be on a fulcrum, with CKC appearing to be more or less liberal depending on what issue is at hand and who is observing. A faculty member in the theology department explained that CKC “actually puts itself in the middle on a lot of things. From the perspective outside of Christian higher education, I’m sure Christian Kingdom College seems far to the right in every way, but within Christian higher education, I think it’s very centrist.” This perspective was shared by another faculty member who stated that to many people outside of the institution, CKC probably seems to lean more to fundamentalist viewpoints than to modernist or progressive. An anthropology professor offered a perspective that extended this idea, noting that when CKC “speaks on certain issues, it tends to define the middle and it becomes a way of other groups then distinguishing themselves vis-à-vis us.” These comments suggest that there are mutually defining and reinforcing processes at work that occur when Christian Kingdom College defines itself, and institutional actors perceive that other colleges define themselves in relation to CKC, followed by any subsequent change in how the college adjusts its presentation of self.

It makes sense, then, that actors at other Christian schools take their cues from the
observations of the decisions and actions made by CKC leaders. A professional in student affairs suggested that beyond institutions of higher education, leaders of churches, para-churches, and missions and other global leaders look at decisions Christian Kingdom College makes on controversial issues before making decisions of their own. He went on to describe the response that emerged when seven years prior, in 2004, CKC changed its Statement of Responsibilities, referred to by many students as “The Pledge,” to a community covenant. The pledge had prohibited students to dance, but the covenant no longer did so. The shift garnered national and international attention. An administrator likened CKC to a lightning rod, the way it garnered so much attention after the change became public. He recollected what the press wrote: “This sleepy Christian college in the Midwest can now dance. They're going to hell in a handbasket.” Liberty University lamented, “Another Christian college goes down to the world.” The perception among Christian colleges was that CKC was becoming too worldly. Despite some backlash, the student affairs professional noted that leaders of other Christian institutions later referenced CKC’s decision to change its community standards in justifying their decision about dancing at their own institutions.

This example might provide some explanation for why, at the most senior levels of leadership, there is a sense that CKC has a responsibility as an institution to provide leadership to people and communities who are not knowledgeable about Christianity and the integration of faith and learning. A senior leader talked about the role CKC plays in shaping the landscape of Christian higher education institutions. He takes the responsibility of leading his institution seriously because he recognizes that his institution is viewed as one of the elite institutions among Christian liberal arts colleges, a perception supported by Forbes, Kiplinger’s, U.S. News and World Report rankings. He described a commentary he had recently published in Inside Higher Ed, explaining:
What is our responsibility [to the public]? Why do we hold these views that we do? What do they mean? I tried to make an argument basically that if there is a vision for education as a marketplace of ideas, then there’s something intrinsically wrong with one set of ideas—those being the ideas of orthodox Christianity—being banned from the marketplace. That’s not to mean Christian Kingdom College is making converts and convincing people who are doubters. To have a rational argument doesn’t mean that I’m going to convert you to my thinking, but is there at least a legitimate point? Can you enter my frame of reference? … I feel like we have an obligation in educating our students, and as we engage broader higher education culture as an institution, we have an obligation to enter the frame of reference of others, understand them, represent them to where, if I give a summary of your views of something, you ought to be able to say, “Well, I would’ve said it differently, but yes, you’ve got my basic points.” And there’s a very real sense in which that same basic sentiment is not being extended to us.

These comments suggest that beyond the leadership that CKC provides to its peer institutions, the college assumes a role of defending the notion that the marketplace of ideas cannot be skewed toward liberal viewpoints and that true discourse must allow the opportunity to engage rationally defensible ideas regardless of how popular or unpopular they may be.

It is clear that the identity of Christian Kingdom College is informed by perceptions of the way those outside view and behave toward CKC, a finding explained by a principle from the tradition of symbolic interactionism. Although CKC is not an individual actor, the institutional members formulate their perceptions of the college based on how others view them. Those members so tightly embrace the identity of the institution that it seems possible for the institution to act as a singular entity with a self. Thus, members of CKC make decisions based on others’ perceptions and whether they wish to challenge or reinforce those perceptions.
CKC must meet institutional standards required of members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) and balance those against pressures for legitimacy in the broader academy. CKC thus acts conservatively in responding to both sets of pressures and accordingly draws criticism from either group when the institution is deemed not to be meeting expectations. Emblematic of the competing tensions that result from being an institution within a broader national culture and being a leader among Christian institutions is the challenge of addressing gender roles and same-sex relationships. When it comes to questions about gender roles and sexual orientation within the context of an evangelical Christian worldview, the influences of the CCCU and broader culture are very much at work. The next section discusses these issues in greater detail.

**Gender Roles and Sexual Orientation**

Members of Christian Kingdom College must navigate a dynamic external culture regarding gender roles and sexuality. For the most part, there is a cohesive and widespread acceptance of the key elements of the organizational culture that coalesce to form the institution’s identity. That identity is shared and supported by the vast majority of all members of the organization. Faculty and student data from CCCU institutions supported this perspective; faculty perceived that their institutions did not place priority on promoting gender equity among faculty. Compared to students at other baccalaureate institutions, CCCU students had much higher levels of agreement with the statement that the activities of married women are best confined to the home and family. However, there seems to be some uncertainty about how changing cultural mores should intersect with the traditional socio-political positions taken by evangelical Christians.

Within the context of evangelicalism, so-called “reformed circles” exist that may hold differing viewpoints from orthodox perspectives. A common debate that occurs within reformed
circles is about the role and status of women. In keeping with a psychological need to maintain a sense of distinctiveness, a female faculty member noted that “evangelical churches have made fostering family togetherness a kind of core aspect of their identity.” She explained that an “entrepreneurial spirit” characterizes evangelical Christians and suggested that in order to maintain a sociological distinction from non-Christians, evangelical Christians have capitalized on the notion of family values as a sort of brand strategy. A “family togetherness” identity promotes a number of socially conservative positions, including the position that women are responsible for keeping the family together and that families are made up of a heterosexual couple and their children.

Women are expected to be modest, avoiding any behavior that might appear overtly sexual, and many students described the conflicts they had with friends both at Christian Kingdom College and at other institutions. Some students view virginity as a gift to be shared only with one’s spouse, and the standards and expectations around their dating culture are such that students do not believe they should have sex outside marriage; they are, therefore, more likely to marry young because as the female faculty member above described, “They’re tired of being virgins.” Her conclusion is supported by students’ perceptions that, as one student noted, “It’s known that after you graduate senior year, you’ll have six or seven weddings the summer after.”

Christian Kingdom College, though made up of evangelical Christians who are generally more conservative in their theology compared to mainline Protestants, does not take a position on the ordination of women. There is no unified position about women’s roles, and the community covenant and statement of faith do not instruct community members on “what you have to think about gender.” Although not widely used outside the evangelical Christian world, there are terms to denote the two main positions about women’s roles: complementarian and
egalitarian. According to one administrator, a complementarian view states that “the pastor and elders should be male. It goes back to certain passages that describe an early church.” In contrast, those who espouse an egalitarian view would argue that there was a cultural basis for leadership being restricted to male members of the church, and that with changes in culture there might be corresponding changes to women’s roles and opportunities. Some faculty and administrators note that not having a unified position about the role of women, either in the church or the broad culture, creates an environment in which students must consider both general viewpoints about gender roles and then construct their own.

As noted, CKC does not hide its identity, and therefore, at different points in time, the college has been designated by the Princeton Review as one of the most stone-cold sober campuses in the country, which was, in fact, the case for multiple years in the previous decade. The phrase “stone-cold sober” meant that students were known for their high levels of studying and their little or no alcohol use. In this way, the student culture is more modest than other colleges but is consistent with evangelical Christian mores. Part of the reason might be driven by a feeling that evangelical Christians have lost some of their distinctiveness, which a faculty member in communication noted might well be a “sociological effect.” He went on to explain that today some Christians feel that as a group, they are “almost indistinguishable sociologically by the measurables” such as divorce rates or alcoholism rates. For this reason, there is a “psychological necessity” of maintaining “distinctive Christian mission” as perhaps exemplified by the positions CKC takes on alcohol, sex, sexuality, and gender roles. He soberly observed that it “does seem funny. Why is this the hill we’re dying on? Why is this an issue?” He seemed to be pointing out that being a faithful Christian may not require militant opposition to issues about which many Christians may hold different opinions and which may be peripheral to being a person who believes that salvation depends on a personal relationship with Christ and that Christ
is the Savior.

Many other individuals, without being prompted, articulated the tension caused by Christian Kingdom College’s institutional position on sexual orientation. There is a strong and general awareness that CKC is viewed, as one student described, as the “number one anti-gay, homophobic school” in the nation. National data from CCCU institutions indicates that students at CCCU institutions had much higher levels of agreement that there should be laws prohibiting same-sex relationships and much lower levels of agreement that same-sex couples should have the right to marry.

The perception was also illustrated by the institution’s recent encounter with an unaffiliated gay and lesbian alumni organization. The organization distributed a letter around the entire campus informing the community of their plans to attend various homecoming events. The group’s intentions included a desire to bring general awareness to the plight of gay and lesbian students at CKC. Religion and heterosexuality are so closely tied that as one student put it, “Finding a non-believer on campus is like finding someone that says, ‘I’m struggling with homosexuality.’” By engaging in public displays of affection during homecoming events, the gay and lesbian alumni would be visible and agitate the campus culture. Their actions would also symbolize a general protest of the college’s position and cultural practice with regard to same-sex relationships. One of the group’s most important actions was to challenge CKC’s theological arguments legitimizing its position on same-sex relationships. To do so, the group had to develop its own theology, illustrating once again the expertise and mastery that CKC students have regarding the tenets of the Christian faith.

The alumni group initially expressed a desire not to engage with the CKC administration. However, many members of the group eventually elected to talk with an administrator who had significant responsibilities for student wellness and worked constantly to understand how to best
support current students on campus who were, as she described them, “same-sex attracted.” One current student said that the administration told the student body, “We want you to know they’re coming. Show them respect, but also encourage them not to live that lifestyle.”

In response to the alumni group’s flooding of the campus with an open letter criticizing the college for its institutional position on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning (LGBTQ) issues, the president wrote an open letter that outlined and defended the college’s position on same-sex relationships. The rationale for CKC’s outward disapproval of same-sex relationships is grounded in a biblical orthodox position regarding sexuality and marriage. A senior administrator expounded on this position, saying that the full intimacy of human sexualities [are] meant to be experienced between a man and a woman in holy matrimony, and all other fully intimate expressions of humans or human sexuality are not moral options for a Christian and are not viewed positively by God. Marriage is the union of one man and one woman.

By all accounts, it seemed that everyone on campus had read the letter, and although faculty and administrators who participated in this study seemed supportive of the letter, students were less so. There was a range of reasons for student confusion about this issue, with one end of the spectrum being the position that being gay or lesbian is not a sin and the other end of the spectrum being that same-sex love is, as one female student described, “just like any other sin.” Many students seemed to still be coming to terms with what they believed, with one student’s contradictory remarks capturing her confused perspective, “It’s hard because—I mean, I don’t know. I don’t think we should discriminate against sexual orientation and I think as a social policy, I'm totally for it. In terms of the church, I'm not sure. Of right now, I don’t think I could condone it but I wouldn't want to turn them away from the community. I think there’s a difference.” Students seem to feel a real desire to find clarity on this issue, with another student...
explaining that “[homosexuality is] one of my things that I’m asking God for more wisdom on.”

Another example illustrates the tensions that arise from maintaining CKC’s biblical orthodoxy, and relates to an incident that occurred three or four years prior in which a humanities department drew unfavorable attention because of its hiring practices. During a recent faculty search, the department publicly expressed its unwillingness to hire openly gay scholars. Subsequently, the institution drew fire from a national scholarly association for perceived discriminatory hiring practices against gay and lesbian faculty. As recalled by one administrator, the main scholarly association for the discipline elected to “identify institutions that discriminate against GLBTQ people in hiring by flagging those [job] advertisements with an asterisk.” He went on to say that the asterisk notes “that we are out of compliance; that we’re pariahs because we discriminate against GLBTQ people.” In this sole instance, the declaration by an external body that CKC is discriminatory in its hiring practices may not have a major negative impact on the institution; however, an accumulation of negative reactions to discriminatory actions may have different consequences for the college.

Administrators recognize that to some extent such a hiring practice makes CKC a “pariah,” and that despite some individuals’ beliefs, choosing “this hill to die on” may not make much sense. However, drawing this particular line helps CKC to maintain its sociological distinctiveness and remain distinctly Christian as the rest of the “measurables” that are used to distinguish Christians from other groups become muddier.

The issue could become critical in the institution’s future eligibility for public funds. The college, like nearly every institution in the U.S., relies on public financial resources to help fund its operations. Public perceptions could shape policymakers’ perspective on whether Christian Kingdom College is compliant with non-discrimination requirements that are attached to eligibility and acceptance of state and federal monies. Although there is what faculty and
administrators call a “felt concern” and a “real” concern about future accreditation and the potential of losing public resources due to practices designed to be faithful to the institution’s religious roots, at the most senior levels of leadership there seems to be a sense that if push came to shove, the institution would remain true to its biblical orthodox principles rather than compromise its theological position about sexuality or change its practices. The explanation for this stubbornness may have to do with the nature of faith, more generally speaking. An associate professor explained:

If you believe in a truth, even if it’s utterly unverifiable, which is what Jacques Ellul calls ‘the faith,’ the fact of that belief actually gives you a kind of fearlessness with which to engage the opposite or contrary to that belief; whereas, if you don’t believe in the truth, you’re genuinely kind of desperately searching for what is the truth that I should live by. And there’s an anxiety to it, and then there’s more attachment rather than detachment in your ability to talk about it. So it’s complex.

Despite CKC’s outward and seemingly clear position that gay and lesbian sexual relationships are sinful because they take place outside the parameters of sacred marriage, there are likely other unspoken reasons. Still, there is a somewhat more complex intellectual position that is not often broadcast to the public. An administrator in student activities explained that there is this [official] “monolithic institutional dynamic going on, but then you also have this other cultural confusion processing messiness-disagreement-don’t-buy-into-the-institution-wholeheartedly [dynamic].” The complexity is still grounded in the biblical orthodox position that wholeness is a virtue achieved by becoming the person God intends you to be. In the case of same-sex orientation, this position becomes what a leader at the college described as a “critical issue, a pivotal issue” because one could argue that the person God intends you to be is a gay or lesbian person.
Administrators are the most obvious standard bearers of the Christian educational mission. These individuals perform important gate-keeping functions, serve as the points of contact for external groups, and function as conduits of information between the greater Christian church leadership and the college community. Despite shifting social mores, administrators draw the lines in the sand with regard to controversial social and political issues, and on top of that they serve as important role models for the rest of the campus community, toeing the line even in difficult situations. With respect to the gay and lesbian alumni organization and the departmental hiring issues, leaders of the institution demonstrated their commitment to principles of evangelical Christianity through their public and official responses and through ongoing public dialogues on controversial and contemporary issues.

The convening of people who are all members of the church incubates a set of ideas and values that are strengthened because of the critical mass. That the socialization or enhancement of beliefs and values occurs in the context of an institution of higher learning further legitimizes the perspectives.

With respect to the role of women, CKC does not endorse one particular perspective, although the broader evangelical Christian culture promotes more traditional roles for women in culture and in the family. CKC certainly takes a clear position that the behaviors related to same-sex orientation are not moral, and this perspective is mutually reinforcing of the idea that a family unit comprises a heterosexual couple and their children. That these two positions are shared by most members of the campus is important because one of the main ways that Christian Kingdom College enacts its mission is in preparing students for community engagement through ministry and Christian outreach.

**Community Engagement and Christian Outreach**

As background to CKC’s community engagement, compared to other colleges and
universities there were statistically significant differences on specific viewpoints between CCCU institutions that participated in the 2004 surveys and all other baccalaureate institution (see Appendix G and Appendix I for all results). Faculty at participating CCCU institutions had higher levels of agreement with the idea that colleges have a responsibility to work with their surrounding communities to address local issues, that it is important to prepare students for responsible citizenship, and that it is important to help students learn how to bring about change in American society.

Members of CKC community indicated that students are the primary community served by the college. But before participants could offer an opinion on what primary community CKC served, there was a great deal of discussion about what the term “community” meant. During the academic year prior to the one in which data collection occurred, members of campus had engaged in a campus-wide book reading and discussion about the concept of community, which likely influenced the way in which many participants perceived the concept. One student captured the sense of community felt by many members of the institution, referring to the “all-school Communion.” She said, “I can point out most of the freshmen. I can say, ‘Oh, I recognize him from last year.’ So I recognize most faces on campus.” Another described community as “people that you can pour into and bless and love, but also having people that are pouring into you. I see it as like a cascade. So if I’m a vessel, a pitcher, or a vase, or whatever, and I’m pouring water into others, I can only pour so long before I run out of what’s inside.” On a basic level then, membership in a community requires some form of relationship and exchange that nurtures the members of that community in some form.

When asked to consider whether there is a particular community the college serves beyond the campus borders, individuals’ responses did not point to any singular or particular community. One student suggested that CKC first prioritizes its service to the local
community—the campus and then the church. Many other participants shared the sentiment put forth by an administrator responsible for overseeing many community outreach organizations and ministries that CKC does not “as an institution [have] a certain community that they’re seeking to serve; there are parts of Christian Kingdom College that are seeking to serve certain communities.” In general, responses fell along a spectrum, with the most specific answer being that beyond the student body, CKC serves some local community, such as the refugee community down the road from the college. (The refugee population in the surrounding areas is sizeable. Many of the refugee children have difficulty adjusting to their schools due to language and cultural barriers, so CKC students spend time with these families and sometimes tutor or mentor the youth.)

The other end of the spectrum was the group of responses with reference to CKC serving the world or the church or potential church. However, one faculty member who taught theology and ethics argued that community would be “too broad to put your arms around—like the mission statement to society and the church.” Collectively, these individuals were suggesting that CKC “wants to serve the entire Christian community and … the world.” In the end, it seemed that the common thread in individuals’ description of “community served” was that service to all the communities was service to the greater church and potential church.

Rather than the type of community served, it seemed more important to consider the type of service that was performed and for what purpose. One student affairs professional noted that, although he did not perceive there to be one concentric circle beyond CKC that it serves, the idea of being in service to community comes from a “desire to be salt and light to a dying world to the far reaches wherever and however we’re called and to be faithfully present with our gifts and our influence in those different settings, whether it’s Uganda, Wall Street, or backwoods Iowa, or a small farming village.” He expounded on the importance of being aware of the Gospel and
bringing that perspective to the work, as well. This administrator’s comments further suggest that the outreach and ministry performed by students buttresses the general institutional mission of serving Christ, which might also be described as building up the church and the kingdom of God.

All members of the community described how their work and studies are forms of engagement with the world, and through that engagement they spread Christ’s message in the mission fields. Because there is not one singular, bordered area that counts as the main community CKC serves, the college mission translates into sending into the world. As one student described, “Christians that are aware of issues and are able to understand more sensitive issues on how to go into the mission field are able to deal with secular people that hold differing beliefs, and are able to still live out your faith and make the world a better place.” The college mission has a missionary sense to it that traces back to the institution’s religious roots.

Although a commitment to principles of the Christian faith is at the heart of the institution’s mission and identity, and although CKC shares many characteristics with those of a church, faculty and administrators regularly need to distinguish for students that the college is a place of learning and not a church. A tenured professor in anthropology explained, “I just find myself reminding students a lot that CKC is not a church. You need to be part of the church, and being at CKC is not it.” In fact, for this reason, faculty and administrators strongly encourage students to join a local church and become involved in those activities. Administrative leaders want students to experience being part of a local church community because that is what they will do when they leave CKC. However, administrators and faculty believe that few opportunities for student leadership exist in local church communities, and CKC therefore works to provide leadership development opportunities through the college experience.

There are many programs around the college that facilitate leadership development from a Christian perspective. However, the office that supports Christian outreach programs and
ministries is the most notable embodiment of CKC’s effort to engage with communities beyond the boundaries of the college. The office is the main venue for helping students engage in the world beyond CKC and develop leadership skills that they can use in their church communities after graduation. Through the twenty-two ministries coordinated by the office and forty student leaders, approximately eight hundred students are involved annually in some form of college-sponsored community engagement that is integrated with a Christian worldview.

Notably, a good number of students at CKC want to pursue traditional evangelism after college. According to a theology faculty member, many students “want to be foreign missionaries; they see themselves as servants of the world.” Part of this drive is grounded in the distinctly evangelical Christian perspective that it is through ministry that Christ’s love is perfected through us. Programs in the Christian ministry and outreach office can help students who wish to pursue this path by giving them opportunities to learn about different aspects of evangelism. One student described the contributions of that office to her learning experience as an office that “tries to take abstract discussions and show students how to contextualize them around the world.” She seemed to be suggesting that her involvement permits her to take the learning she experiences in the classroom and apply it in the real world. In this way, the office facilitates a form of praxis for CKC students.

If the mission of the college is, in part, to facilitate the development of “whole and effective Christians” and the process of becoming whole and effective means integrating faith and works, then CKC’s mission is predicated on promoting a faith-based and theologically grounded engagement. In this way, the institutional mission reflects an additional goal of building up the church. A faculty member who teaches theology and ethics noted that some members of the public react to this aspect of the mission with the sentiment, “Oh, I see. You want to build your kingdom.” His comment suggests that this type of engagement is not always
well-received by outsiders and may have a condescending feel to it.

The perception that CKC is focused primarily on proselytizing the evangelical Christian word makes sense in light of the impression that some students give when discussing their community outreach in the various mission fields. The ways in which they discuss their service projects and their community involvement reveal a belief that the students can help the population in question. Students talk about their desire to serve unreached people and minister to others in a way that brings them to Jesus. This perception makes sense given that students from CCCU institutions reported much higher levels of agreement that their religious beliefs lie behind their whole approach to life. They all describe evangelism, which by its nature assumes that the evangelizer is in a more knowledgeable and elevated position compared to the evangelized person. This deeply ingrained belief — held by many, though not all, of CKC’s students — reflects a sense that they know better how to live because they know, generally, the means to salvation. This point may be moot for members of CKC who are proud, though occasionally question viewpoints commonly held by evangelical Christians. Rather than promoting an approach to community engagement that begins from the assumption that the servant and outsider knows what the community needs, institutional actors’ pride and conviction in CKC’s institutional mission of integrating faith and learning means that service to Christ provides the guiding force for all mission work, Christian outreach, and community engagement.

**Concluding Points**

Christian Kingdom College, an evangelical Christian institution of higher learning, is one of 118 institutional members in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. This section summarizes the characteristics of CKC, contributions that members of the institution perceive that they make to higher education and the greater public, and the challenges that CKC experiences given the current contexts for higher education in the U.S. It provides insight into
the way that the public engagement by niche institutions has social and political dimension to it.

The institution has a number of distinctive characteristics, which combine to form a unique institutional identity. One of the most prominent characteristics of CKC is its mission of integrating faith and learning. The institution delimits the populations that are granted admission to the campus to Christians — more specifically, Christians who believe that a relationship with Christ is the means to salvation and that Christ is their Savior. In fact, the application for admission asks, “Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal savior?” Because faithfulness to an orthodox biblical approach to life is valued above all other priorities, the broader evangelical Christian community questions the intellectual pursuits of faculty, students, and administrators. As a result of the historic anti-intellectualism on the part of some Christians, many faculty and students outside Christian higher education and the general public who are unfamiliar with Christian higher education may not take faculty and students at CKC seriously or consider their contributions to scholarly discourse to be legitimate.

Institutionally, CKC exists within a broader evangelical culture that may question its core purposes of teaching and learning. Because the institution is well-respected in the Christian college world as well as the entire landscape of colleges and universities, CKC has taken on the role of defending evangelical Christian ideas in the marketplace of ideas and Christian higher education as one type of institution among many. As one of the most highly regarded Christian colleges in the nation for both its academic rigor and strong religious convictions, CKC provides leadership and sets benchmarks for its niche group. Leaders work to remain faithful to orthodox biblical principles, and in making decisions on challenging and controversial issues, the institution often emerges as centrist. The reason is that actors at other colleges and institutions will look at CKC’s decisions, and as the actors at other institutions define themselves in relation to CKC, they create a spectrum of institutional Christian types ranging from liberal to
conservative, putting CKC in the center of the spectrum.

Fundamentalist and conservative Christians have developed an oppositional orientation toward an increasingly liberal U.S. culture. No longer are evangelical Christians viewed as cultural critics, agitating for progressive social change. Instead they are viewed as individuals advocating for more conservative social, cultural, and political views. Notable conservative positions include the traditional role of women in the family and the perspective that families constitute a heterosexual couple and their children. From this perspective, institutional actors should be able to refrain from hiring gay and lesbian faculty, and oppositional responses to gay and lesbian alumni organizations are necessary. Although sexual orientation is not a federally protected class, the current socio-political climate may offer foreshadowing of a future national policy change that would protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people. If this change takes place, the college might then face the danger of losing its accreditation, which would make the institution ineligible for the whole range of public funds available under the Higher Education Act and its amendments. Yet the college leadership seems confident that it would forego public funds before changing its theological commitments or practices, in a manner similar to what Grove City College decided back in the 1980s. With respect to gender and sexual orientation, the viewpoints of CKC faculty, staff, and students are shaped largely by scripture, and although there is an official monolithic perspective about gender and sexuality at CKC, communicated through speeches and written discourse, the reality is that there seems to be growing uncertainty of conviction among student populations.

The approach to questions about gender roles and sexual orientation within the college is indicative of the way that members of the institution approach their work on a local and global level. CKC’s educational mission, as it is enacted locally, is to integrate its educational enterprise with faith. One of the primary ways the college promotes faith and learning is to encourage
students to integrate faith and works or by outreach and engagement with communities in need, facilitated in large part by the formal structure of the Christian outreach and ministry office. How need is defined maps back to the idea of unreached people, or non-Christians, as well as those who do not have a saving personal relationship with Christ. Outreach is conceptualized as service and ministry to those populations. In this way, CKC pursues its mission in such a way that it takes into account Christians and non-Christians alike, and in doing so, on a meta-level, seeks to build the kingdom of Christ.
CHAPTER EIGHT
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This study was about institutional diversity and the role that niche colleges and universities play within the U.S. higher education enterprise. The preceding chapters presented case studies of three U.S. institutions that were founded to serve a specific population. This study found that the present-day organizational cultures at these institutions reflected the extent to which these institutions persisted in their efforts to continue their historical mission of advancing the needs of a particular group.

If for no other reason than historical function, niche institutions’ present-day conceptualization of “community” includes the population for which the institution was founded. For these institutions, meeting the real or perceived needs of groups that share a characteristic of race, gender, or religion motivated the institutions’ engagement with those historical communities in order to promote social, economic, and political equity for the non-dominant groups. The institutions’ community engagement in the present day reflected a more complex conceptualization of community that crossed demographic boundaries and demonstrated the potential for colleges and universities to facilitate coalition building across artificial borders of identity.

The first part of this chapter discusses themes and implications that emerged across the three case studies. The discussion spans four themes: how the three institutions in this study compete in the higher education marketplace based on their service to narrowly defined populations; the behaviors of institutional actors create an impression that institutions can have social selves; the similarities and differences in the way niche institutions engage their communities; and the social, economic, and political benefits generated by the institutions. The second part of the chapter discusses implications and draws conclusions about this study.
Cross-Case Analysis and Discussion

The Higher Education Marketplace

The findings from the case studies show how the three institutions in this study can be viewed as actors in the higher education marketplace. Each case study yielded the empirical data to make a claim that in pursuing missions designed to serve narrowly defined populations, the three niche institutions in this study contributed to institutional diversity by providing options for students in the broader higher education marketplace. Furthermore, they also competed for students and were responsive to the expressed interests of students and their families and sometimes to other formal and informal constituencies.

Racial Uplift University (RUU) continues to provide access to African-American students much as it did when it first opened. Although colleges and universities can no longer deny otherwise qualified applicants on the basis of race alone, many African-American students still do not have access to Predominantly White Institutions on the basis of grade point averages and test scores, the most commonly used proxies of students’ likelihood of success. In this way, RUU remains true to its historical mission of broadening access to higher education. RUU is also responsive to conditions in the environment. Faculty and administrators are aware of the public policy agendas of legislators, public leaders, and funding agencies. In order to garner public support, when necessary, RUU campus members may frame their work in terms that will suggest better alignment with these external groups.

Among the women’s colleges, there is a real struggle to continue their historical mission and still maintain a competitive market position. Women’s Equity College (WEC) struggles to meet its enrollment targets, and one way the institution has done so in the last several years has been to admit international female students whose families will permit them to pursue higher education only if it occurs in a single-sex environment. In this way, the historical mission of
broadening access to higher education continues. The decreasing demand for single-sex education among domestic students derives from female students’ increasing interest in attending larger, co-educational institutions that offer more pre-professional programs and are in or close to large metropolitan areas. For some students, institutional prestige is a factor in their enrollment at other institutions. WEC has worked to increase its yield among the high-achieving students who are admitted at other elite and highly selective institutions by giving them special status as scholars and sometimes offering them additional aid. The institution has addressed the concern about workforce preparedness by developing a curricular program that connects specific coursework in the liberal arts with practical experiences. In making these adjustments to the current structures, the institution has responded to market pressures from students and families and market pressures from other institutions.

Unique to this study was the finding that institutional leaders at Christian Kingdom College (CKC) explicitly suggested they play an important role in the marketplace of ideas in both academia and the broader culture by defending knowledge that incorporates beliefs and values from an evangelical Christian tradition. This finding is not surprising given a recent study’s finding that evangelical Christian education emerged as a response to the secularization of the American educational enterprise and a growing sense among evangelical Christians that the religious nature of Christian institutions had become diluted, and that to some extent, the re-emergence of evangelical Christian education has been motivated by an effort to reclaim a perceived loss of power in American society (Slater, 2012). In contrast to the women’s colleges and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which were established to serve populations previously excluded from higher education, CKC was established to serve evangelical Christian students. The concerted efforts to strengthen evangelical Christian higher education reflects an effort to reclaim the religious roots of early American higher education and to provide a college
education stemming from what CKC faculty and administrators call a confessional base. Similar to how families of some of the students at Women’s Equity College want their daughters to pursue education in a specific environment, it is plausible that some of the students who attend CKC would not be permitted to attend a secular or a non-Christian college or university. In this way, CKC provides access to higher education for these Christian students. In the way that Women’s Equity College responds to prospective students’ interest in a more practical education, CKC is also responsive to the needs of students and parents who may be concerned about the extent to which CKC provides an education and environment that is consistent with the institution’s evangelical identity.

The three institutions in this study describe their educational missions in terms of serving a specific population. In doing so, Racial Uplift University and Women’s Equity College continue a legacy of broadening access to higher education for women (especially international women) and racial minorities who might not have the same opportunities if not for these institutions. Although Christian Kingdom College does not continue a historical legacy of broadening access, it nevertheless provides an option for evangelical Christian students whose families want them to attend institutions that offer an education integrating faith and learning.

The mere existence of these three niche institutions adds to the institutional diversity of colleges and universities today, thereby contributing to consumer choice from a marketplace perspective. The findings from the case studies are consistent with the increasingly neoliberal college and university. Specifically, the push by external forces toward accreditation and universalization, efficiency and accountability, and free market competition over regulation create challenges for each university. Each institution faces its own set of issues in responding to the needs of their niche markets. Historically Black Colleges and Universities face the challenges of losing high achieving African-American students to predominantly White or other minority-
serving institutions and addressing the needs of underprepared academic students who were not admitted elsewhere. Women’s colleges, which are largely liberal arts colleges, have a shrinking market as female students become more interested in institutions that are co-ed or offer pre-professional programs. Evangelical Christian colleges face the challenge of providing a learning environment and education that students and their families feel are consistent with evangelical Christian culture. Additionally, these colleges experience pressure from the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, which holds its member organizations to a set of standards.

Although academic capitalism is not a primary theoretical concept framing this study, it is helpful in explaining the behaviors of institutional actors, in particular, the way in which concerns about financial viability at the women’s college motivate institutional leaders to seek out development of new revenue sources. More generally, the three institutions in this study offer a specialty “product” in providing a college education in an environment homogenous by race, gender, or religious identity. Among the students who are interested in the education offered by each institution, a heightened consumer mentality may drive students toward institutions that have a greater perceived value. As a result, niche institutions face an additional challenge of having to compete within their niche markets, and as they do, they may inadvertently contribute to the demise of their peer institutions. Researchers have suggested that prestigious institutions have a secure market position and therefore do not need to be as concerned about competing for students (Brint, Riddle, Turk-Bickaci, & Levy, 2005). If true, WEC and CKC, as liberal arts institutions, are better situated to maintain their market position relative to other women’s and evangelical Christian colleges. In contrast, RUU has a sufficient number of practical arts and pre-professional programs as an artifact of its history. RUU’s curricular offerings are likely reinforced by higher proportions of students with low-test scores and low socioeconomic backgrounds; the latter point is consistent with the research of Brint and colleagues (2005).
The case studies also show that curricular change, mission drift, and marketing changes represent institutional-level reactions to external conditions. These responses are not solely a reaction to the marketplace alone, but to evolving social and cultural environments, as well. The social position of the communities and groups initially served by the three institutions has changed, as has the cultural context in which each group lives. Since HBCUs and women’s colleges were first founded, African Americans and women have received the right to vote; racial segregation has been outlawed; and Title IX has not only been passed but has withstood legal scrutiny. It could be argued that the status of African Americans and women has been elevated and that because these groups are no longer lawfully excluded from accessing higher education, the need for HBCUs and women’s colleges no longer exists. However, not only is it the case that HBCUs and women’s colleges meet the unique needs of African Americans and women, but these niche institutions also serve to remind the rest of the nation that despite improved conditions, African Americans and women continue to experience exclusion from a variety of spheres, including higher education. In contrast, although it has never been the case that Christians are a marginalized group, the stronghold of Christian conservatism over public opinion and public affairs seems to ebb and flow. As colleges and universities have become more secular, Christian leaders have reasserted the need for Christ-centered education. The relationships between the three institutions in this study and the communities they have historically served are essentially dynamic. As the needs of those groups change, the institutions modify their institutional agendas in ways that better meet those needs.

As the communities and groups served by the institutions change or as these institutions adapt to the needs of the market, they run the risk of drifting away from the missions that make them distinctive, thereby damaging their unique value propositions. However, much of institutional behavior is motivated by what campus members perceive others to believe about the
institution. The next section describes how the collective responses of institutional actors formulate the equivalent of an “institutional” social self.

**Institutions as Social Selves**

Members of each campus have some understanding of the public’s perceptions of the institution. As awareness grows, individuals intentionally develop lines of action that challenge or reinforce those perceptions. Many institutional actors at Racial Uplift University (RUU) believe that much of the public holds the opinion that the institution admits students without real consideration of their likelihood of succeeding. They also suspect that external parties believe that an education that takes place in a predominantly Black institution does not prepare students for real-world conditions. Finally, some RUU members who oversee outreach or engagement efforts have concluded that external parties, including policymakers, do not understand the need or value of specific forms of outreach and engagement efforts. The interpretation of these environmental conditions leads RUU actors to formulate actions that range from dismissive to resistant. In response to critics who disparage RUU admissions policies and the value of an RUU education, faculty and administrators work hard to retain and graduate students who will be active and successful participants in the workforce and in public life. When they encountered lack of financial or political support from public policy makers for outreach and engagement efforts, faculty and administrators may reframe the work they are doing to appear better aligned with policy makers’ agendas, or they may seek alternative sources of support necessary to deliver the initiative.

Many individuals at Women’s Equity College (WEC) believe that members of the public view the college as a “gay school,” to use the words of some administrators, faculty, and students. Some participants asserted that admissions and recruitment personnel purposely avoid hiring “someone with a more masculine-presenting identity” to work for them. Additionally,
faculty, staff, and students are sensitive to the criticism that the lack of male students on campus makes the WEC environment nothing like the real world that graduates will need to function in; specifically, the workplace and public life. WEC faculty and administrators do not directly engage this criticism, but instead provide a rigorous educational experience and necessary support for students that translates to many achievements by WEC graduates, including disproportionate representation among scientists and public leadership positions.

Christian Kingdom College (CKC) administrators and faculty believe that members of the public perceive the institution to be anti-intellectual. CKC members seek to change this perception by encouraging their faculty to produce rigorous scholarship that withstands peer review. Rigorous scholarship is situated within the current state of the field and builds upon existing knowledge, whether to support or challenge it. Interestingly, by supporting rigorous faculty scholarship in the sciences and perhaps even social sciences, CKC creates an opportunity for faculty to challenge the norms and values of the institution. Another perception campus members combat is that CKC is a conservative and homophobic institution that discriminates against gay people. The campus leadership has affirmed the decisions of various campus actors who have been identified by external parties as being discriminatory by articulating the institution’s theological commitments and the subsequent beliefs about same-sex relationships. In this way, leadership reframes the issue not as one of discrimination but as the right to hold a set of religious beliefs, however unpopular they may be. On the other end of the spectrum, members of the public with conservative or evangelical Christian views may perceive CKC to be too liberal when institutional actors exercise liberty about beliefs or practices that are not considered essential to the practice of evangelical Christianity, as was the case with the change in the community covenant. CKC’s continued membership in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities and institutional actors’ efforts to foreground the institution’s religious
commitments in all its communications and marketing materials is aimed at affirming the institution’s evangelical Christian roots.

The participants in this study communicate institutional values through their decisions to modify or not modify their actions in response to their perceptions about how the public views them. For instance, in persisting with work on health disparities and poverty, regardless of the support of public officials, RUU signals that community outreach and engagement are important. In selecting a certain type of student to represent the college, WEC leaders signals to the campus community an underlying concern that stereotypes about students’ gender identity and sexuality make the institution less attractive to prospective students. This behavior reflects a conflict between the institution’s espoused value of diversity and desire to remain financially viable. In clearly communicating its many conservative positions on issues of science and religion, alcohol, and sexual orientation, Christian Kingdom College communicates the importance of its theological commitments in the context of the liberal academy. Across the three case studies, institutional actors in this study thus modified their behaviors in response to members of their constituent communities, namely prospective African Americans, female students, and evangelical Christians.

Organizational culture influences special-mission colleges and universities’ interactions with the broader culture, and the strong institutional cultures reveal the institutional equivalent of a social self, allowing the institution to behave and interact in the broader culture as if it were an individual actor. The significance of this theme is threefold. First, a strong institutional identity and cohesive organizational culture can provide a strong foundation or motivation for asserting and advocating social and political viewpoints in the public sphere. (e.g., RUU’s uninterrupted and continuing efforts to lobby for resources and public policy change for poor Blacks in the rural South, CKC’s position on sexual orientation). Second, more cohesive cultures can facilitate
organizational change and decision-making during difficult times. Cohesion can also help minimize conflict during times of organizational change, while lack of cohesion or unresolved tensions can result in conflict (Tierney, 1993). Strong institutional identities and cultures can also facilitate decision-making during periods of challenge. This idea is illustrated in WEC’s wide range of opinions about moving to a co-educational student body. For these reasons, institutional leaders who view organizational culture as a variable may seek to manage culture in order to develop a strong identity. The final point of significance, taking into account elements of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), is that institutions are social actors that further the movement of higher education away from a “public good” model to that of a private good. This point, illustrated by WEC’s curriculum shift away from pure liberal arts to a more practical and pre-professional curriculum, shows how the student market and successfully exert pressure on an institution’s decision-making; as potential investors, students’ and parents’ opinions are important in shaping institutional behavior. Institutional leaders who are serious about their commitment to communities—which falls into the public good model—will need to resist external forces that move them away from a public good model and toward a private one.

**Community Engagement and Outreach**

Exploring the community engagement and outreach efforts that take place at each institution reveals that members of each campus thought about community in multiple ways. The nature of engagement and outreach varies by institution, as do the organizational structures and models to support engagement.

**Conceptualization of Community**

At each institution, the idea of “community” has at least three layers, beginning with the campus community. Administrators and faculty place greatest priority on meeting the needs of the undergraduate student population. Beyond the boundaries of campus, members of each
institutions seek to meet the needs of the people who live adjacent to the campus or within neighboring towns. Only in the case of Racial Uplift University are the people in the adjacent communities also members of the population primarily served by the institution. Finally, to varying extents, in carrying out its mission, each campus serves its niche population on a local, national, and global level. In producing a disproportionate number of African Americans and women who earn advanced degrees, pursue careers in the sciences, or become national leaders, Racial Uplift University and Women’s Equity College increase the representation of African Americans and women in the broader society. By addressing the needs of impoverished African-American communities in the South, Racial Uplift University serves the needs of African Americans in the region. In serving international students, Women’s Equity College addresses the educational needs of a global community of women. By facilitating student engagement in international ministry and helping to build the church around the globe, Christian Kingdom College serves the global community of evangelical Christians.

The final layer of community leads to one additional conclusion. The three institutions in this study have continuously maintained a sense of community that includes the historically served population. In the present day, each institution’s identity continues to be tied to the educational mission, which remains closely connected to the institution’s historical mission of serving a particular niche community. Each institution’s community exists at the intersection of a series of contexts that are, at a minimum, social, political, and cultural in nature. Changes in any of those contexts may alter the institutional actors’ perceptions about the niche community or its needs. Contextual and environmental changes may also transform the community itself.

This point is illustrated by considering the position of women in the U.S., which has evolved over time. From the women’s suffrage movement to the women’s liberation movement, women have gained a number of important victories, potentially signaling to the general public,
to women themselves, to higher education leaders, and to policymakers that women have achieved parity. Whether leaders of women’s colleges or prospective female students perceive that women and men are equal, and whether this notion is real or perceived, there is still a real impact on the institution’s viability. From this perspective, leaders of women’s colleges might alter their curriculum, marketing strategies, or even student composition. Prospective students and their families might not see the value of attending a women’s college, contributing to market challenges. However, the niche institutions that serve women can play an important role in making the case that women’s colleges are still very much relevant by reminding the general public that in the case of women, or other groups that continue to be marginalized, there is still much work to be done.

**The Nature and Goal of Engagement**

Each institution varies in the extent to which engagement and outreach efforts have missionary undertones or are instead truly collaborative efforts with the community. The nature of engagement varied from an empowerment model to an action research model to a missionary model. The founders and early leaders of Women’s Equity College (WEC) and Christian Kingdom College (CKC) embedded missionary perspectives in their educational vision. Though not explicitly religious, Racial Uplift University’s (RUU) early leadership believed in a set of principles about educating former slaves, and that message was preached across the Black Belt region. At CKC, the missionary perspective was illustrated by religious evangelism that informs institutional actors’ engagement with community. Although the outreach of RUU and WEC sometimes reflect a missionary feel, the goals are, respectively, improving the living conditions of African Americans and improving the social and educational environments for local community members. In contrast, at CKC, missionary work is, itself, the end goal of outreach efforts. WEC and RUU utilize more collaborative approaches to their engagement and outreach
efforts, with RUU’s basic relationships with local and regional communities most closely resembling partnerships, while CKC continues its missionary approach to outreach.

Community engagement at each campus is geared toward making the world a better place, and members of each campus use phrases like “doing good” and “social justice” to describe the contributions made to a community. The engagement and outreach that come out of Racial Uplift University and Women’s Equity College are driven by a liberal view of the world, and campus members are concerned with improving the conditions of people who have less material wealth. At RUU, engagement and outreach occur through a multitude of campus units and through some student-initiated, informal arrangements with local schools or other community organizations. RUU works to address subsistence, poverty, education, and health issues in Black Belt communities and seeks more systematic change by working to help a community empower itself and to change public policy to address the needs of African American communities. At WEC, the engagement is structured through community-based learning opportunities and occasional volunteer arrangements. Community-based learning opportunities take the form of internships, research projects, and service opportunities through which students explore issues of gentrification and urban policy, gender equity, racism and equality, and environmental sustainability. Campus leaders also participate in national conversations about women’s concerns, and following graduation, many alumnae join service organizations or initiatives such as Teach for America. Christian Kingdom College is distinctly different from the other two institutions in this study. Engagement efforts are aimed at ministering to those who live in the surrounding areas—most notably, youth, immigrants, and refugees. The goal of engagement focuses on bringing more people to the Christian faith and growing the church. Campus members enacted these efforts through evangelism, often on an international stage.
Models of Outreach and Engagement

The formal structures that support community outreach and engagement vary by institution. At Racial Uplift University, outreach and engagement efforts are promoted by a variety of programs, departments, and centers. Far more than at the other two institutions, the institutional commitment to community outreach and engagement is diffused, permeating the entire culture. At Women’s Equity College, there are some disparate efforts to connect members of the campus with local or global communities. The most visible and centralized structure for promoting community engagement is the community-based learning unit, which is housed in a campus center that seeks to foster leadership development in a liberal arts setting. At Christian Kingdom College, the most visible organizational structure for promoting engagement and outreach is the Christian outreach office, which is organizationally located in Student Life.

The needs that each institution addresses fall along the continuum from basic physical needs to social and psychological needs. Racial Uplift University addresses the needs of African Americans that are more basic, including subsistence, education, and poverty. At the same time, RUU provides higher education for African Americans, thereby maximizing its service to the broader population by promoting individual and social benefits to its graduates. Ideally, graduates will utilize their knowledge and skills to improve the lives of African Americans through service or professional endeavors. Women’s Equity College provides access to education for both domestic (particularly, low-income students) and international female students. Although it is debatable whether higher education is a right, under the perspective that knowledge is a precursor for power, WEC may be helping to lay the foundation for greater equity for women worldwide. Christian Kingdom College’s community outreach efforts also make positive contributions to evangelical Christians worldwide through the institutional-level efforts to evangelize and to local refugee families through tutoring and mentoring efforts. In
contrast to the nature of engagement at RUU and WEC, CKC has the goal of developing students who will help build Christ’s church through evangelism, justice, and hospitality. The Christian outreach office’s mission of facilitating student learning and development is not concerned with the basic survival needs of its niche community; it is concerned with building and strengthening the evangelical Christian community.

Each campus environment likely reinforces the mission by creating an environment that is nearly homogeneous in terms of the identity characteristic that most defines the institutional mission. Students at Racial Uplift University (RUU) may have lived in predominantly African-American communities prior to attending RUU and they can conceivably do so for the remainder of their lives. Between seeing a sea of African-American faces and encountering statues and monuments honoring individuals who made major contributions to the advancement of African Americans, RUU students are surrounded with symbols of the institutional identity, which create an environment where they are likely to become acquainted with the institution’s mission.

Ideally, institutional leaders hope that students graduate with an appreciation of the mission and a willingness to live out the mission in their post-college engagement in the workplace, service organizations, churches, and other forms of public life and to perpetuate the institution's values, mission, and orientation toward community engagement in the broader culture. Women’s Equity College students are more aware of being women because they were in a single-sex environment. At Christian Kingdom College, students are required to attend a certain number of chapel services, which reinforced messages about serving Christ’s kingdom. These two institutions are made up of campus populations that may not be replicated outside the institution.

These findings yield three significant points. First, community engagement across artificial community boundaries (gender and low-income populations; race and low-income populations; religion and national origin) has the potential to contribute to more effective
practice of democracy. Second, in line with earlier scholarship, community engagement, as a form of collaboration and partnership, can serve as a force to revitalize the “public good mission of higher education by focusing teaching, service, and research on a public good (Subotzsky, 1999). Finally, community engagement and outreach initiatives at niche institutions also intersect with the democratic functions of colleges and universities through their role as actors in the broader culture. The next theme discusses this last point in greater detail.

**Promoting Substantive Citizenship in A Diverse Democracy**

For a democracy to be vibrant and effective, all members of the democratic community must feel a sense of belonging to the community and have real opportunity for substantive participation in public life, discourse, and decision-making. These populations should have equal access to education, health, the workforce, and civil rights in order to live meaningful lives. As a diverse democracy, the U.S. has the additional challenge of including the many populations that the democracy comprises. As discussed in Chapter 3, citizenship requires the following: access to relatively equal levels of economic welfare along with the right to share in the social heritage of the nation (social rights); rights to freedom and equality (civil rights); and the ability to participate in political processes (political rights). Although two of the institutions in this study seek to meet the needs of historically underserved populations, niche institutions are conceptualized more broadly. As defined in Chapter 1, the term “niche institution” refers to an institution whose role in the system is to meet the needs of a specific group and whose resources are influenced by perceptions of the institution’s relevance by specific populations and interest groups, state and federal governments, and others who are in a position to influence the allocation of resources. The three institutions in this study bestow social, economic, and political benefits on their niche communities that promote greater participation in American life.
Social Benefits

The three institutions in this study tailor their educational programs to narrowly defined populations. To some extent, the economic benefits they bestow on individuals and society are no different than other colleges and universities. Specifically, they prepare students for the workforce and, in that way, contribute to the economic health of the nation. However, these three niche institutions offer forms of education that meet the needs of diverse populations.

By virtue of tailoring their missions to narrowly defined populations, the three institutions provide a form of education that is either needed or desired by the constituency it serves. Racial Uplift University educates many African-American students who might not be admitted elsewhere and seeks to educate those students about the social and historical forces that shape the experiences of many African Americans in the U.S. RUU also provides continuing education and workforce training for African Americans who are not enrolled at the institution. Women’s Equity College offers a single-sex education to the global community of women and Christian Kingdom College provides education to integrate faith and learning.

Individuals at all three campuses also provide support to many local schools in the form of tutoring and teaching. Through ACT preparation classes and a variety of programs designed for high school students, Racial Uplift University faculty and students are highly engaged in creating a pipeline to college and exposing students to elements of a college-going culture. Women’s Equity College and Christian Kingdom College faculty and students may provide similar experiences for high school students, but if so, that engagement is less prominent.

All three institutions offer rigorous academic programs. Racial Uplift University and Women’s Equity College consistently produce disproportionate numbers of graduates who pursue advanced degrees in science. Notably, WEC is also known for the number of graduates who choose non-lucrative nonprofit careers after graduation or who eventually choose to enter
public service. Because women and African Americans who have historically and collectively had less access to education and jobs that require better education, RUU and WEC contribute to the social mobility of these populations. Women and African Americans would likely experience the same benefit from attending any college or university; thus, what makes the contributions of niche institutions distinctive is that the students graduating from them are entering fields and professions in which women and African Americans are underrepresented. The disproportionate achievement can be partially attributed to the individual social benefits that students at niche institutions experience—namely, experiencing a sense of belonging, developing confidence, and forming a will to persist. Such qualities serve students as they pursue academic and professional advancement opportunities.

Many leaders at the three institutions hope that these students, who might not be admitted to other schools, will get a rigorous education and develop an orientation toward the niche community that will prompt them to give back at a later time in their lives. Such an influence could multiply the positive effects of the institution on the historical niche community as well as other communities in the broader culture.

**Economic Benefits**

This study was not focused on the economic health of the nation, but as an aspect of citizenship, a portion of the theoretical framework was concerned with democracy and a tripartite conceptualization of citizenship (Marshall, 1964). The economic benefits created by niche institutions fall under the social dimension of citizenship and are thus discussed briefly here. Research in political science and economics has shown that diverse groups perform better than less diverse groups in solving problems and predicting outcomes, two functions that are considered central to innovation, economic growth, development, and prosperity (Page, 2007). The connection is indirect in that identity diversity more than likely, but not always, leads to
what Page calls “cognitive diversity” as a result of the diverse experiences that result when people are treated differently due to some identity characteristic. When identity diverse groups bring their varied perspectives and cognition to bear on solving problems, the outcomes are better, but only if the costs of identity diverse groups are mitigated. Costs might include cooperation, communication challenges, and lowered satisfaction, and these costs can potentially outweigh the benefits of identity diverse groups.

Women’s colleges and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and perhaps also evangelical Christian colleges, may broaden access to higher education for constituent populations. Doing so contributes to the disproportionate preparation of diverse groups for industries and professions that are key to national economic growth and prosperity. Additionally, the sum total of the institution’s educational enterprise may help constituent populations develop viewpoints that may represent the niche institutions’ historical constituencies of women, African Americans, and evangelical Christians. Finally, niche institutions, in offering environments that meet the distinctive needs of their constituent populations, allow for a space in which campus members can develop confidence in their abilities and voices. By helping form individuals who have the confidence and communication skills to participate effectively in problem-solving situations in the public sphere, niche institutions play an indirect role in the benefits of institutional and individual diversity.

**Niche Institutions in the Political Sphere**

The portion of this study that considered how the three institutions in this study engage in their communities at local and other levels reveals that niche institutions are political actors in the diverse democracy of the U.S. The data bear out the suggestions of scholars who assert that institutions should encourage political involvement as well as play a role in advancing democratic principles, such as tolerance and concern for individual rights and group welfare
(Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, Rosner, & Stephens, 2000). At each campus, though to varying degrees, faculty, staff, administrators, and students contributed to national discourse about a variety of political issues including, but not limited to, women’s rights, same-sex marriage, and poverty among racial minorities. At Women’s Equity College, campus members partner with the U.S. State Department to develop strategies for increasing women’s participation in political leadership and public service. Christian Kingdom College, through scholarship and media, defend the evangelical Christian position on same-sex relationships. CKC leaders view their arguments as theologically grounded, and those arguments can later provide the intellectual and scholarly foundation that conservative groups use when engaging in public policy debates about same-sex marriage and same-sex benefits.

Each campus conducts outreach and engagement that indirectly and directly serve the institution’s niche population. For instance, Racial Uplift University serves the needs of African Americans locally and beyond in order to improve access to education, health, and political resources. CKC members minister locally and globally and furthered an important goal of many evangelical Christians in working to build the church. By representing and defending the viewpoints of their niche constituencies, advocating for their constituencies in the public sphere, and helping their constituencies obtain resources, the three niche institutions in this study can be viewed as political actors engaging in the broader public arena of debate. RUU and WEC specifically serve as foils to models of social exclusion that inhibit democracy. Rather than being independent actors that conveniently promote the more effective practice of democracy, these two niche institutions exist and function as a response to the failures of the democratic project. This last point raises one other consideration about the role that niche institutions play in the diverse democracy of the U.S.

Debates in democratic theory indicate that there is no singular or normative perspective
about democracy that prevails in the U.S. For instance, by some accounts, equal rights under the law are sufficient indicators of a successful democratic practice. By other accounts, equal rights or equal protection under the law can still fall short of true democracy. Those individuals, like myself, believe instead that substantive participation by all groups, with special attention to historically marginalized groups, is more critical than equal rights. Another example is that by some accounts, a democracy values free expression to the point that all diverse viewpoints are permissible, no matter how negative, disenfranchising toward another group. In contrast, others, like myself, might hold that true democratic practice does not recognize as valid any viewpoints, worldviews, or practices that lead to the denigration, silencing, or alienation of a specific group. When such views are legitimized, democracy fails because the potential for substantive participation by the silenced or alienated group is eliminated.

Recognizing that differing views of democracy shape the ways in which institutional actors think about and justify their work, a key democratic tension emerges from the case study of Christian Kingdom College. Institutional leaders at CKC justify the promotion of their viewpoints about same-sex relationships as a function of the institution’s theological commitments. Their actions communicate their view of democracy as one in which all viewpoints are equally valid. However, my view of democracy does not consider such perspectives as legitimate within a diverse democracy; as such, my conclusion is that with regard to same-sex relationships, CKC is anti-democratic in its practices. CKC’s practice perpetuates a model of social inclusion that inhibits the effective practice of democracy and prohibits the substantive participation of a group based on its differences.

All told, at the institutional level, niche institutions play roles in the social, economic, and political life of the nation. The diversity of institutional types serves a diversity of populations, groups, and needs, and thus has the potential to strengthen democratic practice. This theme,
along with those discussed earlier, has a variety of implications for institutional leaders, policy makers, and researchers. They are discussed in the second part of this chapter.

**Implications of the Study**

**Implications for Institutional Leaders**

A better understanding of organizational culture can help higher education administrators usher in organizational change with limited disruption and respond, rather than react, to environmental factors that might challenge the organization (Tierney, 2008). Institutional leaders with a clear grasp of organizational culture can address internal contradictions and clarify institutional identity in order to strengthen organizational culture. They can then make difficult decisions with limited conflict and work to contribute to purpose and identity. Given the findings from this study, leaders of niche institutions that are resource-challenged and need to generate additional revenue could work more diligently to enroll international students and thus maintain their historical commitment to educating and serving a specific population.

By this study’s definition, niche institutions have missions of educating and serving a narrowly defined population. For many of the administrators and institutional leaders in this study, the institution’s mission was an important tool; notably, the most senior administrator at each campus was the greatest proponent of ensuring that all members of the campus had awareness of the institutional mission. Building a cohesive culture would allow for the development of an institutional-level social self; institutional leaders might then be able to exert greater influence in advocating for their communities. Leaders can strengthen efforts to achieve their missions by thinking creatively about how to obtain additional resources that can help with the pursuit and realization of the institution’s strategic goals.

Institutional leaders could develop partnerships with other institutions and organizations in the U.S. that are mutually beneficial. Some HBCUs have established partnerships with other
institutions as a means to strengthen or broaden their academic programs. Two good examples are joint efforts made between HBCUs and Predominantly White Institutions. In 1969, Spelman College, Morehouse College, and Clark Atlanta College in Atlanta established a dual-degree program in engineering with Georgia Institute of Technology (Spelman College, n.d.). In 1995, North Carolina A&T State University, an HBCU, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, a Predominantly White Institution, created a joint master’s program followed by a joint school of nanoscience and nanoengineering in 2010 (Albritton, 2012). As noted by Lynn Huntley, former president of the Southern Education Foundation, whose mission is “to improve educational excellence and equity in the South” (Southern Education Foundation, n.d.), the need for collaboration by HBCUs (Keeler, 2004) is critical for institutions that are small and have limited resources. HBCUs and other niche institutions with limited resources could form partnerships with public and private colleges and universities outside the niche to fill any gaps in their educational program offerings. Remaining financially viable is the only way these institutions can deliver the variety of social and political benefits discussed throughout this study.

Institutional partnerships are generally structured around academic program needs. Any HBCU that opts to form a partnership should also consider intentional partnerships that can help them collaborate in efforts to address twenty-first century problems or generate additional resources to address problems facing their communities. For instance, many students and faculty at Racial Uplift University have academic training in agriculture, architecture, engineering, and business. RUU could partner with Santa Clara University, a Predominantly White Institution in California’s Silicon Valley recognized for its work on sustainability, which is understood as a balance of social, economic, and environmental needs. Faculty and students at this campus have backgrounds in engineering and business as well, and the institution hosts a center that helps develop social entrepreneurs and promotes the development of technologies that provide social
benefit. Additionally, the institution has well-established partnerships with Silicon Valley companies such as Google, Apple, and Intel. Racial Uplift University has a commitment to a social justice agenda that seeks egalitarian outcomes for all people, with a particular interest in alleviating poverty. Both institutions also have demonstrated an interest in promoting racial diversity. A partnership between these two institutions could create multiple opportunities for members of each institution to collaborate and learn from one another and to develop strategies for achieving shared goals.

Partnerships could be important means of justifying state support for colleges and universities. In order to justify the best allocation of state funds, boards want to be confident that there is a significant return on their investment in higher education. When institutions within a system appear to duplicate other programs or when college facilities and other institutional resources are underutilized, state boards are inclined to withdraw their support. For HBCUs that have experienced the threat of closure by state higher education boards, alignment of resources and educational programs with other colleges and universities could maximize the use of facilities and resources. Partnerships that form around shared goals with respect to community engagement could also help build coalitions across institutions and communities defined by identity characteristics. Such collaborations could serve to broaden the notion of multiculturalism and to more effectively promote the ideals of a diverse democracy.

Leaders of niche institutions that are small and have limited resources would do well to become familiar with accreditation requirements and prepare for them; often, they do not have the infrastructures necessary to meet accreditation standards (e.g., endowment, giving, or the administrative structure to handle the accreditation process) (Keels, 2004). More specifically, their leaders should prepare to articulate niche institutions’ unique value proposition to accreditation agencies and public policy makers. Otherwise, niche institutions may face the
danger of being eliminated for program duplication and low graduation rates compared to other institutions. Institutional leaders should also re-imagine their purposes and take into account their role as “citizens” in the local community, particularly in serving individuals with less access to privilege, power, and wealth. Institutions already take up space within a geographic community, and by being an active member of the community they could reinvigorate the “public good” model of higher education. State higher education boards do not view higher education as a public good, but institutional leaders could help change this perspective. Development of closer town and gown relationships could maximize the contributions of institutions to the broader culture and can provide justification to public policy makers for continued public support.

**Implications for State and Federal Policymakers**

Institutional diversity is critical to the strength of the American higher education enterprise. Diversity allows for the proliferation of varied missions that can meet the needs of diverse populations (Stadtman, 1980). Institutional diversity also permits the system to respond to the needs that surface in the environment (Birnbaum, 1983a). This study underscores the importance of institutional diversity in the form of niche institutions by demonstrating how the service aspect of these institutions expands or delivers important benefits to individuals, communities, and society that may not be addressed by other institutions in the broader culture. Public officials should better account for the role of niche institutions in their policy development.

At a time when public funds for higher education are decreasing, identifying ways to maximize investment in higher education may better serve the needs of the public. Public policy makers could begin to do so by taking into account the impact and benefits that institutions have on local communities and underserved populations. They could also consider the indirect effects on those populations as measured by the work that graduates of the institution do on behalf of
those populations.

State and federal governments support all colleges and universities in the U.S. in the form of state appropriations, student financial aid and other programs. Policy can better support institutional diversity by taking into account the unique value propositions of niche institutions. For instance, state public policy makers should not focus solely on reducing duplication and maximizing the use of campus facilities. Furthermore, at the state level, as unemployment rates increase in a state, state appropriations toward colleges and universities decrease; however, because higher education enrollments tend to rise during times of greater unemployment, McLendon, Hearn, and Mokher (2009) suggest that policymakers should invest in higher education. Their reasoning was that state investment might be crucial to maintaining quality in education when the system is more taxed than usual; quality higher education will result in the production of citizens who are better equipped to solve public problems. The findings from this study, about how niche institutions’ contributions to the public, should be taken into account in shaping public policy. The benefits that the niche colleges and universities bestow on local communities in terms of education, poverty reduction, and public health are numerous. Public officials will always be pressed to make decisions about funding competing priorities. Investment in niche institutions that have strong community engagement thrusts, such as Racial Uplift University, can potentially provide a greater return on public investment through their efforts to address poverty, health disparities, and K-12 education. The effect is indirect and should be tested empirically, but the proposed impact is plausible.

Eligibility for federal funds remains tied to accreditation standards. Federal officials may want to consider more explicit support for niche institutions in future reauthorizations of the Higher Education Amendments and future renewals of executive orders that support minority-serving institutions. Furthermore, policy makers should remember that colleges and universities
can positively contribute to a more effective practice of democracy when institutional types expand democratic principles such as tolerance, respect for others, and concern for individual rights (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, Rosner, & Stephens, 2000). Knowing that existence of diverse institutional types allows for greater responsiveness to the surrounding social environment (Birnbaum, 1983a) means that colleges and universities have the capacity to respond to social forces that can promote or detract from democratic ideals. It is true that Christian Kingdom College, as an expression of the viewpoints of evangelical Christian colleges, is protected in a democracy. However, CKC promotes anti-democratic perspectives about LGBTQ individuals and cannot serve the broader societal goal of promoting substantive citizenship for all citizens. Public policy makers should refine their policies and guidelines for allocating public funding to take into account institutional activity that promotes anti-democratic perspectives or practice.

**Implications for Theory and Research**

The findings of this study suggest that niche institutions with cohesive organizational cultures form the equivalent of social selves. Future research might also explore how organization’s cultures help to illuminate the ability of institutions to exert influence in the social and political realm beyond the campus borders. This recommendation echoes other scholars’ calls to pay greater attention to the potential for higher education to shape American culture (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, Rosner, & Stephens, 2000).

Theories relating to organizational culture (e.g., Tierney, 1993, 2008) should broaden the concept of community in the environmental dimension. Tierney argues that an institution’s environment can provide the stimulus for change. The way he describes the environment seems to assume that, at a minimum, the environment would include the geographic area surrounding an institution. The findings of this study suggest that an institution’s bounded community (campus and local geographic area) and imagined community can both provide critical
environmental contexts for understanding organizational culture. Additionally, theories of organizational culture could be strengthened by more clearly articulating how academic capitalism in the new economy influences culture.

The research and knowledge production that occur at colleges and universities contribute to the marketplace of ideas; a diversity of ideas supports innovation, which is an important contribution to the public (Page, 2007). Future research may need to focus on how other niche institutions contribute to the marketplace of ideas. Understanding the extent to which niche institutions champion ideas and perspectives that might otherwise be invisible on the national stage could better illuminate the contributions that niche institutions make to the broader culture.

The findings of this study suggest that niche institutions’ engagement with their historically served constituencies and other communities with which they affiliate in the present day have the potential to produce benefits that span artificial community boundaries. Future research could further explore this idea. Additionally, future research should continue to probe how the community engagement of niche institutions translates to distinctive contributions to individuals’ and communities’ social, economic, and political standing.

Theories that address the politics of education and theories that consider the relationship between education and democracy often discuss the democratic functions of education. Some educational and political theorists consider the role of educational institutions in the effective practice of democracy in a diverse nation. They focus much attention on how elementary and secondary educational institutions treat diversity, broadly defined, in curricular content and delivery. They also consider the implications of organizing schools to take into account the beliefs and practices of particular groups. Theories that emerge from educational research are more likely to take into account the role of colleges and universities. In this study, which was concerned with the effective practice of democracy in a diverse society, theoretical concepts
from political science (substantive citizenship, recognition, representation, association) were incorporated into the framework. The theories from which those concepts originated frequently alluded only to a role for K-12 schools in, for example, the politics of solidarity. Given the claim that this dissertation makes about colleges and universities as social selves and political actors, theorists concerned with the role of educational institutions in a diverse democracy may wish to broaden their theoretical frameworks to take into account the role of niche colleges and universities on the individual communities and on public policy and democratic practices.

Conclusion

Restatement of the Problem

As analogs of the nation’s diverse population, the ways in which HBCUs, women’s colleges, and evangelical Christian institutions engage in public life reflect the diverse needs of the nation. More importantly, they perform vital roles for the public good that are directly related to the populations and interests for which they were initially established (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Anderson, 1988; Birnbaum, 1983b; Solomon, 1986; Wolfe, 2006). This study sought to understand the role that three types of niche institutions play in the broader higher education enterprise by examining how an institution’s identity differentiates it from other colleges and how that identity reflected an institution’s niche role. This study further sought to understand how institutional actors interpret and enact the identity at three distinct niche institutions. Finally, this study sought to investigate how three niche institutions created benefits and challenges through the support of and engagement with their respective communities.

Concluding Thoughts

Each institution in this study has a distinct value proposition, which refers to the value an institution adds to the institutional marketplace. Institutions with unique value propositions—as they relate to specific groups/populations—provide benefits and challenges to higher education
in the U.S. in the form of adding to institutional diversity and choice within the market. Additionally, these institutions serve as centers of teaching, learning, and outreach to various constituencies in the U.S. population. The demand for the type of education offered at each institution, as indicated by student enrollment, has varied over time, but for the present moment continues. Demand alone is not enough to argue for continued public financial support of niche colleges and universities. It is the work that takes place at each institution that directly and indirectly benefits the economic, social, and political needs of women, evangelical Christians, and African Americans that may provide such justification. At the same time, the unique or distinctive contributions that each niche institution makes can be anti-democratic. Thus, in their allocation of public resources, policy makers should also take into account institution-level decision-making and behaviors that run counter to the democratic purposes of colleges and universities. In so doing, they would better serve the needs of our democracy.

African Americans, women, and evangelical Christians constitute three distinct identity groups in the U.S., and individuals can be members of one or more groups. On the surface, the institutions in this study, in their historical and contemporary efforts to serve the needs of a particular group, benefit their constituent populations in a political manner. These diverse institutions also help serve the needs of a diverse democracy by adding to the marketplace of ideas, which is a critical element of a democratic culture. The study’s findings provide insight into the ways that niche institutions positively contribute to the diverse democracy of the U.S. One mechanism is by representing or defending the viewpoints of various groups. Christian Kingdom College illustrates this possibility. As a community held together by a set of shared religious beliefs and potentially shared worldviews, the behaviors of institutional actors reflect the beliefs that are shared by many evangelical Christians. Christian colleges do not purport to serve lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning (LGBTQ) populations as part of
their mission; therefore, CKC’s enactment of its mission via taking publicly oppositional perspectives on gay marriage is not inconsistent with the institutional identity. However, through enactment of the mission, institutional actors limit the civil rights of LGBTQ populations and work against their recognition and representation.

Niche institutions may also contribute to the effective practice of democracy through direct efforts to help their constituent populations more fully participate in the social and political fabric of the nation. The niche institutions in this study have missions centered on serving women, evangelical Christians, and African Americans. Race, gender, and religious belief are characteristics that have frequently been central to discourse about multiculturalism and identity politics. Although this study did not employ a multicultural framework or draw on theories of identity politics, other theoretical concepts from the sociological and political science disciplines frame the study’s exploration as to whether niche institutions help strengthen democratic practice by promoting solidarity among particular populations within the larger democratic polity of the U.S.

Members of a democracy must also have substantive participation in the social, political, and economic domains of the democracy. In the U.S., minority groups do not enjoy the material and political privileges that dominant groups do. The theory that collective memory—or collective forgetting—impacts a democratic society’s ability or inability to promote equity and justice suggests that a minority group must have a collective memory and understanding of the group’s history in order to recognize the need for a remedy. In this way, minority groups bear the burden of promoting justice and equity, which are vital to democratic practice. Dominant groups thus preserve their privilege by making invisible the systems of privilege that prevent minority groups from remedying past and continuing disadvantages and inequities. Racial Uplift University and Women’s Equity College help preserve collective memory of African Americans.
and women in the U.S. The racial composition of faculty, staff, and students at RUU and the single-sex student body at WEC create environments where gender and race are visible in the everyday life of campus members. Furthermore, the educational missions of RUU and WEC promote a historical understanding of gender and race inequity. At RUU, campus outreach and engagement programs facilitate campus members’ involvement in efforts to directly improve the lives of African Americans.

RUU and WEC are examples of niche institutions that serve historically underserved populations. However, niche institutions are defined more broadly in their education of individuals who identify themselves as a group with common needs and interests. Institutional viability is dependent on available resources and perceptions of the institution’s relevance. Evangelical Christians, though not a historically underserved community, view themselves as a group with specific needs, and the social, cultural, and historical conditions are such that this sector has experienced growth in the last few decades in contrast to HBCUs and women’s colleges.

This study has shown that three specific institutions continue to address some of the diverse needs of populations within the U.S. To varying degrees, the institutions broaden access to higher education and contribute to a variety of communities at the campus and local levels and beyond. The findings from this study also offer some understanding of the benefits of institutional diversity through the promotion and protection of a religious belief system. Finally, the findings from this study indicate that in pursuing differentiated education missions that benefit narrowly defined populations, niche institutions such as HBCUs and women’s colleges can help minority groups preserve important group histories. Niche institutions, more broadly, can also nurture the intellectual and social development of individuals who can bring their diverse perspectives to bear on public affairs as well as the promotion of justice through public
policy, legislation, and other political venues. Niche institutions thus serve the democratic project and help democracy to function more effectively; however, they do so, in part, because democracy is not working.
# APPENDIX A

## HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THE U.S.

1. Alabama A & M University  
   Normal, AL
2. Alabama State University  
   Montgomery, AL
3. Albany State University  
   Albany, GA
4. Alcorn State University  
   Alcorn State, MS
5. Allen University  
   Columbia, SC
6. American Baptist College  
   Nashville, TN
7. Arkansas Baptist College  
   Little Rock, AK
8. Barber-Scotia College  
   Concord, NC
9. Benedict College  
   Columbia, SC
10. Bennett College for Women  
    Greensboro, NC
11. Bethune-Cookman University  
    Daytona Beach, FL
12. Bishop State Community College  
    Mobile, AL
13. Bluefield State College  
    Bluefield, WV
14. Bowie State University  
    Bowie, MD
15. Central State University  
    Wilberforce, OH
16. Cheyney University of Pennsylvania  
    Cheyney, PA
17. Claflin University  
    Orangeburg, SC
18. Clark Atlanta University  
    Atlanta, GA
19. Clinton Junior College  
    Rock Hill, SC
20. Coahoma Community College  
    Clarksdale, MS
21. Concordia College  
    Selma, AL
22. Coppin State University  
    Baltimore, MD
23. Delaware State University  
    Dover, DE
24. Denmark Technical College  
    Denmark, SC
25. Dillard University  
    New Orleans, LA
26. Edward Waters College  
    Jacksonville, FL
27. Elizabeth City State University  
    Elizabeth City, NC
28. Fayetteville State University  
    Fayetteville, NC
29. Fisk University  
    Nashville, TN
30. Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University  
    Tallahassee, FL
31. Florida Memorial University  
    Miami Gardens, FL
32. Fort Valley State University  
    Fort Valley, GA
33. Gadsden State Community College  
    Gadsden, AL
34. Grambling State University  
    Grambling, LA
35. H. Councill Trenholm State Technical College  
    Montgomery, AL
36. Hampton University  
    Hampton, VA
37. Harris-Stowe State University  
    Saint Louis, MO
38. Hinds Community College-Utica  
    Utica, MS
39. Howard University  
    Washington, DC
40. Huston-Tillotson University  
    Austin, TX
41. Interdenominational Theological Center  
    Atlanta, GA
42. J F Drake State Technical College  
    Huntsville, AL
43. Jackson State University
44. Jarvis Christian College
45. Johnson C Smith University
46. Kentucky State University
47. Knoxville College
48. Lane College
49. Langston University
50. Lawson State Community College-Birmingham
51. Le Moyne-Owen College
52. Lewis College of Business
53. Lincoln University
54. Lincoln University of Pennsylvania
55. Livingstone College
56. Meharry Medical College
57. Miles College
58. Mississippi Valley State University
59. Morehouse College
60. Morgan State University
61. Morris Brown College
62. Norfolk State University
63. North Carolina A & T State University
64. North Carolina Central University
65. Oakwood University
66. Paine College
67. Paul Quinn College
68. Philander Smith College
69. Prairie View A & M University
70. Rust College
71. Saint Augustine's University
72. Saint Paul's College
73. Saint Philip's College
74. Savannah State University
75. Selma University
76. Shaw University
77. Shelton State Community College
78. Shorter College
79. South Carolina State University
80. Southern University and A & M College
81. Southern University at New Orleans
82. Southern University at Shreveport
83. Southwestern Christian College
84. Spelman College
85. Stillman College
86. Talladega College
87. Tennessee State University
88. Texas College
89. Texas Southern University

Jackson, MS
Hawkins, TX
Charlotte, NC
Frankfort, KY
Austin, TX
Jackson, TN
Langston, OK
Birmingham, AL
Memphis, TN
Detroit, MI
Jefferson City, MO
Lincoln University, PA
Salisbury, NC
Nashville, TN
Fairfield, AL
Itta Bena, MS
Atlanta, GA
Nashville, TN
Fairfield, AL
Augusta, GA
Dallas, TX
Little Rock, AK
Prairie View, TX
Holly Springs, MS
Raleigh, NC
Lawrenceville, VA
San Antonio, TX
Savannah, GA
Selma, AL
Raleigh, NC
Tuscaloosa, AL
Little Rock, AK
Orangeburg, SC
Baton Rouge, LA
New Orleans, LA
Shreveport, LA
Terrell, TX
Atlanta, GA
Tuscaloosa, AL
Talladega, AL
Nashville, TN
Tyler, TX
Houston, TX
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<th></th>
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<td>92.</td>
<td>Tuskegee University</td>
<td>Tuskegee, AL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93.</td>
<td>University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff</td>
<td>Pine Bluff, AK</td>
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<tr>
<td>94.</td>
<td>University of Maryland Eastern Shore</td>
<td>Princess Anne, MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95.</td>
<td>University of the District of Columbia</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96.</td>
<td>University of the Virgin Islands</td>
<td>St. Thomas, USVI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97.</td>
<td>Virginia State University</td>
<td>Petersburg, VA</td>
</tr>
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<td>98.</td>
<td>Virginia Union University</td>
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<td>100.</td>
<td>Voorhees College</td>
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<td>West Virginia State University</td>
<td>Institute, WV</td>
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<td>102.</td>
<td>Wilberforce University</td>
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<td>103.</td>
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<td>104.</td>
<td>Winston-Salem State University</td>
<td>Winston-Salem, NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105.</td>
<td>Xavier University of Louisiana</td>
<td>New Orleans, LA</td>
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## APPENDIX B

### WOMEN'S COLLEGES IN THE U.S.

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>College Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<td>Agnes Scott College</td>
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<td>Alverno College</td>
<td>Milwaukee, WI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Assumption College for Sisters</td>
<td>Mendham, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Barnard College</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bay Path College</td>
<td>Longmeadow, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bennett College for Women</td>
<td>Greensboro, NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bryn Mawr University</td>
<td>Bryn Mawr, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Carlow University</td>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Cedar Crest College</td>
<td>Allentown, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Chatham University</td>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>College of Saint Benedict</td>
<td>Saint Joseph, MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>College of Saint Elizabeth</td>
<td>Morristown, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>College of Saint Mary</td>
<td>Omaha, NE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Columbia College</td>
<td>Columbia, SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Converse College</td>
<td>Spartanburg, SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Cotey College</td>
<td>Nevada, Missouri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Georgian Court University</td>
<td>Lakewood, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Hollins University</td>
<td>Roanoke, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Judson College</td>
<td>Marion, AL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Lexington College</td>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Mary Baldwin College</td>
<td>Staunton, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Meredith College</td>
<td>Raleigh, NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Midway College</td>
<td>Midway, KY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Mills College</td>
<td>Oakland, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Moore College of Art and Design</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Mount Holyoke College</td>
<td>South Hadley, MA</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Mount Mary College</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Mount St. Mary's College</td>
<td>Los Angeles, CA</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Notre Dame of Maryland University</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Pine Manor College</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Rosemont College</td>
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<td>Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College</td>
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<td>Salem College</td>
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<td>Scripps College</td>
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<td>36</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>Smith College</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>Spelman College</td>
<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>St Catherine University</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>Stephens College</td>
<td>Columbia, MO</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>Sweet Briar College</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>The College of New Rochelle</td>
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<td>The Sage Colleges</td>
<td>Troy, NY</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>Trinity Washington University</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>University of Saint Joseph</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>Ursuline College</td>
<td>Pepper Pike, OH</td>
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<td>Wellesley College</td>
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<td>49</td>
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<td>William Peace University</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>Wilson College</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX C

COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THE U.S.

1. Abilene Christian University  Abilene, TX
2. Anderson University—IN  Anderson, IN
3. Anderson University—SC  Anderson, SC
4. Asbury University  Wilmore, KY
5. Azusa Pacific University  Azusa, CA
6. Belhaven University  Jackson, MS
7. Bethel College—IN  Mishawaka, IN
8. Bethel University  Saint Paul, MN
9. Biola University  La Mirada, CA
10. Bluefield College  Bluefield, VA
11. Bluffton University  Bluffton, OH
12. Bryan College  Dayton, TN
13. California Baptist University  Riverside, CA
14. Calvin College  Grand Rapids, MI
15. Campbellsville University  Campbellsville, KY
16. Carson-Newman University  Jefferson City, TN
17. Cedarville University  Cedarville, OH
18. Charleston Southern University  Charleston, SC
19. College of the Ozarks  Point Lookout, MO
20. Colorado Christian University  Lakewood, CO
21. Concordia University Irvine  Irvine, CA
22. Corban University  Salem, OR
23. Cornerstone University  Grand Rapids, MI
24. Covenant College  Lookout Mountain, GA
25. Crown College  Saint Bonifacius, MN
26. Dallas Baptist University  Dallas, TX
27. Dordt College  Sioux Center, IA
28. East Texas Baptist University  Marshall, TX
29. Eastern Mennonite University  Harrisonburg, VA
30. Eastern Nazarene College  Quincy, MA
31. Eastern University  St. Davids, PA
32. Emmanuel College  Franklin Springs, GA
33. Erskine College  Due West, SC
34. Evangel University  Springfield, MO
35. Fresno Pacific University  Fresno, CA
36. Geneva College  Beaver Falls, PA
37. George Fox University  Newberg, OR
38. Gordon College  Wenham, MA
39. Goshen College  Goshen, IN
40. Grace College & Seminary  Winona Lake, IN
41. Greenville College  Greenville, IL
42. Hannibal-LaGrange University  Hannibal, MO
43. Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, TX
44. Hope International University, Fullerton, CA
45. Houghton College, Houghton, NY
46. Houston Baptist University, Houston, TX
47. Howard Payne University, Brownwood, TX
48. Huntington University, Huntington, IN
49. Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, IN
50. John Brown University, Siloam Springs, AR
51. Judson College—AL, Marion, AL
52. Judson University, Elgin, IL
53. Kentucky Christian University, Grayson, KY
54. King College, Bristol, TN
55. King's University College, The, Edmonton, AB
56. Lee University, Cleveland, TN
57. LeTourneau University, Longview, TX
58. Lipscomb University, Nashville, TN
59. Louisiana College, Pineville, LA
60. Malone University, Canton, OH
61. Master's College & Seminary, The, Santa Clarita, CA
62. Messiah College, Mechanicsburg, PA
63. MidAmerica Nazarene University, Olathe, KS
64. Milligan College, Johnson City, TN
65. Mississippi College, Clinton, MS
66. Missouri Baptist University, Saint Louis, MO
67. Montreat College, Montreat, NC
68. Mount Vernon Nazarene University, Mount Vernon, OH
69. North Central University, Minneapolis, MN
70. North Greenville University, Tigerville, SC
71. North Park University, Chicago, IL
72. Northwest Christian University, Eugene, OR
73. Northwest Nazarene University, Nampa, ID
74. Northwest University, Kirkland, WA
75. Northwestern College—IA, Orange City, IA
76. Northwestern College—MN, Saint Paul, MN
77. Nyack College, Nyack, NY
78. Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, OK
79. Oklahoma Christian University, Edmond, OK
80. Oklahoma Wesleyan University, Bartlesville, OK
81. Olivet Nazarene University, Bourbonnais, IL
82. Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, OK
83. Palm Beach Atlantic University, West Palm Beach, FL
84. Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, CA
85. Redeemer University College, Ancaster, ON
86. Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA
87. Roberts Wesleyan College, Rochester, NY
88. San Diego Christian College, El Cajon, CA
89. Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, WA
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<td>Trevecca Nazarene University</td>
<td>Nashville, TN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102.</td>
<td>Trinity Christian College</td>
<td>Palos Heights, IL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103.</td>
<td>Trinity International University</td>
<td>Deerfield, IL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104.</td>
<td>Trinity Western University</td>
<td>Langley, BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105.</td>
<td>Union University</td>
<td>Jackson, TN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106.</td>
<td>University Of Mary Hardin-Baylor</td>
<td>Belton, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107.</td>
<td>University of Mobile</td>
<td>Mobile, AL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108.</td>
<td>University of Sioux Falls</td>
<td>Sioux Falls, SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109.</td>
<td>University of the Southwest</td>
<td>Hobbs, NM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110.</td>
<td>Vanguard University of Southern California</td>
<td>Costa Mesa, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111.</td>
<td>Warner Pacific College</td>
<td>Portland, OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112.</td>
<td>Warner University</td>
<td>Lake Wales, FL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113.</td>
<td>Waynesburg University</td>
<td>Waynesburg, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114.</td>
<td>Westmont College</td>
<td>Santa Barbara, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115.</td>
<td>Wheaton College</td>
<td>Wheaton, IL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116.</td>
<td>Whitworth University</td>
<td>Spokane, WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117.</td>
<td>Williams Baptist College</td>
<td>Walnut Ridge, AR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118.</td>
<td>York College</td>
<td>York, NE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

VARIABLES USED IN THE ANALYSIS

Items from 2004 Faculty Survey Included in the Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicate the importance to you of each of the following education goals for undergraduate student:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare students for responsible citizenship</td>
<td>1=Not important, 4=Essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance students’ knowledge of and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance spiritual development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial and ethnic diversity should be more strongly reflected in the curriculum</td>
<td>1=Disagree strongly, 4=Agree strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My values are congruent with the dominant institutional values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicate how important you believe each priority listed below is at your college or university:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help students learn how to bring about change in American society</td>
<td>1=Low priority, 4=Highest priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create a diverse multi-cultural campus environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To promote gender equity among faculty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide resources for faculty to engage in community-based teaching or research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create and sustain partnerships with surrounding communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase the representation of women in the faculty and administration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges should be actively involved in solving social problems</td>
<td>1=Disagree strongly, 4=Agree strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A racially/ethnically diverse student body enhances the educational experiences of all students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges have a responsibility to work with their surrounding communities to address local issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Items from 2004 Student Information Form 
and 2007 College Student Beliefs and Value Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicate the importance to you personally of:</td>
<td>1=Not important, 4=essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Influencing the political structure</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Influencing social values</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Becoming involved with programs to clean up the environment</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Participating in a community action program</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Helping to promote racial understanding</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Keeping up to date with political affairs</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Becoming a community leader</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Integrating spirituality into my life</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Seeking to follow religious teachings in my everyday life</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Improving the human condition</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rate of agreement with the following statement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Abortion should be legal</em></td>
<td>1=Disagree strongly, 4=Agree strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The death penalty should be abolished</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>My spiritual/religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HBCUs</th>
<th>All Other</th>
<th>t-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicate the importance to you of each of the following education goals for undergraduate student:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare students for responsible citizenship</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance students’ knowledge of and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance spiritual development</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial and ethnic diversity should be more strongly reflected in the curriculum</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My values are congruent with the dominant institutional values</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help students learn how to bring about change in American society</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create a diverse multi-cultural campus environment</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To promote gender equity among faculty</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide resources for faculty to engage in community-based teaching or research</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create and sustain partnerships with surrounding communities</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase the representation of women in the faculty and administration</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges should be actively involved in solving social problems</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A racially/ethnically diverse student body enhances the educational experiences of all students</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges have a responsibility to work with their surrounding communities to address local issues</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation
Table 2

Result of T-Tests Comparing Faculty Responses at Women's Colleges to Faculty at All Other Institutions (Institutional Level Mean)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicate the importance to you of each of the following education goals for undergraduate student:</th>
<th>Women's Colleges</th>
<th>All Other Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare students for responsible citizenship</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance students knowledge of and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance spiritual development</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>M</strong></th>
<th><strong>SD</strong></th>
<th><strong>M</strong></th>
<th><strong>SD</strong></th>
<th><strong>t-test</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial and ethnic diversity should be more strongly reflected in the curriculum</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My values are congruent with the dominant institutional values</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help students learn how to bring about change in American society</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create a diverse multi-cultural campus environment</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To promote gender equity among faculty</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide resources for faculty to engage in community-based teaching or research</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create and sustain partnerships with surrounding communities</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase the representation of women in the faculty and administration</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>M</strong></th>
<th><strong>SD</strong></th>
<th><strong>M</strong></th>
<th><strong>SD</strong></th>
<th><strong>t-test</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleges should be actively involved in solving social problems</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A racially/ethnically diverse student body enhances the educational experiences of all students</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges have a responsibility to work with their surrounding communities to address local issues</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *p < .05

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation
Table 3

Results of T-Tests Comparing Faculty Responses at CCCU Institutions to Faculty at All Other Institutions (Institutional Level Mean)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>CCCU M</th>
<th>CCCU SD</th>
<th>All Others M</th>
<th>All Others SD</th>
<th>t-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicate the importance to you of each of the following education goals for undergraduate student:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare students for responsible citizenship</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>-5.62*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance students' knowledge of and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>-2.26*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance spiritual development</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>-30.28*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial and ethnic diversity should be more strongly reflected in the curriculum</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>-3.38*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My values are congruent with the dominant institutional values</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>-11.27*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help students learn how to bring about change in American society</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>-5.81*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create a diverse multi-cultural campus environment</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>2.74*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To promote gender equity among faculty</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide resources for faculty to engage in community-based teaching or research</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create and sustain partnerships with surrounding communities</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase the representation of women in the faculty and administration</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges should be actively involved in solving social problems</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A racially/ethnically diverse student body enhances the educational experiences of all students</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>2.66*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges have a responsibility to work with their surrounding communities to address local issues</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>-5.41*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation
Table 4

Result of T-Tests Comparing Student Responses at Women’s Colleges to Students at All Other Institutions (Institutional Level Mean)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004 Student Survey</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>2007 Student Survey</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>t-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women’s M SD</td>
<td>All Other M SD</td>
<td>t-test</td>
<td></td>
<td>Women’s M SD</td>
<td>All Other M SD</td>
<td>t-test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicate the importance to you personally of:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencing the political structure</td>
<td>2.00 0.15</td>
<td>1.81 0.17</td>
<td>-2.43*</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.00 0.14</td>
<td>1.91 .18</td>
<td>-.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencing social values</td>
<td>2.50 0.13</td>
<td>2.39 0.21</td>
<td>-1.15</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.60 0.19</td>
<td>2.63 .22</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming involved with programs to clean up the environment</td>
<td>1.80 0.25</td>
<td>1.81 0.20</td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.10 0.25</td>
<td>2.05 .27</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in a community action program</td>
<td>2.10 0.28</td>
<td>1.98 0.17</td>
<td>-1.79</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.20 0.16</td>
<td>2.21 .20</td>
<td>-.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping to promote racial understanding</td>
<td>2.30 0.31</td>
<td>2.1 0.22</td>
<td>-2.46*</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.60 0.29</td>
<td>2.41 .21</td>
<td>-.20*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping up to date with political affairs</td>
<td>2.40 0.27</td>
<td>2.22 0.26</td>
<td>-1.74</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.50 0.18</td>
<td>2.46 .22</td>
<td>-.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a community leader</td>
<td>2.30 0.22</td>
<td>2.14 0.19</td>
<td>-1.56</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.20 0.19</td>
<td>2.24 .19</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating spirituality into my life</td>
<td>2.50 0.33</td>
<td>2.69 0.61</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.70 0.33</td>
<td>2.85 .58</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures</td>
<td>2.70 0.38</td>
<td>2.51 0.29</td>
<td>-1.48</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.90 0.32</td>
<td>2.87 .26</td>
<td>-.68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking to follow religious teachings in my everyday life</td>
<td>2.40 0.47</td>
<td>2.64 0.60</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.60 0.32</td>
<td>2.54 .59</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving the human condition</td>
<td>2.80 0.34</td>
<td>2.71 0.22</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A N/A</td>
<td>N/A N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion should be legal</td>
<td>2.69 0.46</td>
<td>2.21 0.64</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.60 0.24</td>
<td>2.44 .64</td>
<td>-1.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The death penalty should be abolished</td>
<td>2.69 0.46</td>
<td>2.22 0.32</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.40 0.34</td>
<td>2.39 .34</td>
<td>-.124</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships</td>
<td>1.67 0.33</td>
<td>2.22 0.61</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.50 0.32</td>
<td>1.86 .51</td>
<td>1.59</td>
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<td>Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America</td>
<td>1.82 0.16</td>
<td>1.99 0.19</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.40 0.09</td>
<td>1.69 .17</td>
<td>3.68*</td>
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<td>Realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society</td>
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<td>1.93 0.20</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.00 0.11</td>
<td>1.97 .18</td>
<td>.23</td>
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<td>Colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus</td>
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<td>2.78 0.22</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.80 0.11</td>
<td>2.73 .25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status</td>
<td>2.85 0.47</td>
<td>2.36 0.70</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.10 0.32</td>
<td>2.69 .67</td>
<td>2.77*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished</td>
<td>2.38 0.16</td>
<td>2.62 0.22</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.40 0.15</td>
<td>2.63 .22</td>
<td>2.1*</td>
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<tr>
<td>The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family</td>
<td>1.42 0.23</td>
<td>1.69 0.24</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.40 0.17</td>
<td>1.52 .22</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My spiritual/religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life</td>
<td>2.60 0.35</td>
<td>2.80 0.49</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.63 0.32</td>
<td>2.82 .54</td>
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</table>

*p < .05

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation
Table 5

Result of T-Tests Comparing Student Responses at CCCU Institutions to Students at All Other Institutions (Institutional Level Mean)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicate the importance to you personally of:</th>
<th>2004 Student Survey</th>
<th>2007 Student Survey</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CCCU M SD</td>
<td>All Other M SD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Influencing the political structure</td>
<td>1.70 0.13</td>
<td>1.85 0.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Influencing social values</td>
<td>2.60 0.18</td>
<td>2.34 0.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Becoming involved with programs to clean up the environment</td>
<td>1.60 0.09</td>
<td>1.86 0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in a community action program</td>
<td>2.00 0.16</td>
<td>1.99 0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping to promote racial understanding</td>
<td>2.00 0.16</td>
<td>2.14 0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping up to date with political affairs</td>
<td>2.10 0.16</td>
<td>2.26 0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a community leader</td>
<td>2.10 0.20</td>
<td>2.15 0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating spirituality into my life</td>
<td>3.50 0.24</td>
<td>2.44 0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures</td>
<td>2.60 0.21</td>
<td>2.5 0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking to follow religious teachings in my everyday life</td>
<td>3.40 0.20</td>
<td>2.39 0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving the human condition</td>
<td>2.70 0.16</td>
<td>2.72 0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of agreement with the following statement:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.95 0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.40 0.17</td>
<td>2.60 0.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation
APPENDIX J

RECRUITMENT LETTERS

Sample Text of Email to Recruit Administrators
(to be forwarded by an appropriate campus representative if required by the institution)

Dear [NAME],

My name is Lisa Millora and I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California at Los Angeles. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study about special mission colleges. My study examines how certain colleges and universities in the U.S. uniquely contribute to the fabric of American society. In order to understand this phenomenon, I am interested in understanding the institutional identity of your campus and how that identity informs the institution’s conceptualization of “community” and “public good.” Furthermore, I aim to understand how your institution’s community engagement benefits the larger public.

Participating in the study would involve participation in a 30-60 minute interview. During the interview, you would be asked questions about your perceptions of the campus culture and identity, along with questions about how the campus culture and identity inform the institution’s conception of community and public good. With your permission, I would record the interview so that I have an accurate record of our conversation. The names and identifying characteristics of all participants and campuses in my study will be changed.

If you would like to participate, please respond to this email to set up a time for our interview. I can come to your office or make arrangements to meet you in another space on campus. Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without negative consequence. Please feel free to contact me at lmillora@ucla.edu if you would like more information about the project before deciding whether you would like to participate.

Many thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Lisa Millora
Ph.D. Candidate
Higher Education and Organizational Change
University of California at Los Angeles

Sample Text of Email to Recruit Faculty
*(to be forwarded by an appropriate campus representative if required by the institution)*

Dear [NAME],

My name is Lisa Millora and I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California at Los Angeles. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study about special mission colleges. My study examines how certain colleges and universities in the U.S. uniquely contribute to the fabric of American society. In order to understand this phenomenon, I am interested in understanding the institutional identity of your campus and how that identity informs the institution’s conceptualization of “community” and “public good.” Furthermore, I aim to understand how your institution’s community engagement benefits the larger public.

Participating in the study would involve participation in a 45-90 minute interview. During the interview, you would be asked questions about your perceptions of the campus culture and identity, along with questions about how the campus culture and identity inform the institution’s conception of community and public good. With your permission, I would record the interview so that I have an accurate record of our conversation. The names and identifying characteristics of all participants and campuses in my study will be changed. If you would like to participate, please respond to this email to set up a time for our interview. I can come to your office or make arrangements to meet you in another space on campus. Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without negative consequence. Please feel free to contact me at lmillora@ucla.edu if you would like more information about the project before deciding whether you would like to participate.

Many thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Lisa Millora
Ph.D. Candidate
Higher Education and Organizational Change
University of California at Los Angeles

Dear [NAME],

My name is Lisa Millora and I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California at Los Angeles. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study about special mission colleges. My study examines how certain colleges and universities in the U.S. uniquely contribute to the fabric of American society. In order to understand this phenomenon, I am interested in understanding the institutional identity of your campus and how that identity informs the institution’s conceptualization of “community” and “public good.” Furthermore, I aim to understand how your institution’s community engagement benefits the larger public.

Participating in the study would involve participation in a 60-90 minute interview. During the interview, you would be asked questions about your perceptions of the campus culture and identity, along with questions about how the campus culture and identity inform the institution’s conception of community and public good. With your permission, I would record the interview so that I have an accurate record of our conversation. The names and identifying characteristics of all participants and campuses in my study will be changed.

If you would like to participate, please respond to this email to set up a time for our interview. We can meet at the library or some other quiet space on campus. Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without negative consequence. Participants will receive a $30 cash payment at the completion of the interview. Please feel free to contact me at lmillora@ucla.edu if you would like more information about the project before deciding whether you would like to participate. Many thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Lisa Millora
Ph.D. Candidate
Higher Education and Organizational Change
University of California at Los Angeles
APPENDIX K

CONSENT FORM

IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY AT NICHE INSTUTITIONS: AN EXAMINATION OF NICHE INSTITUTIONS’ UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PUBLIC GOOD
UCLA RESEARCH STUDY CONSENT FORM

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
This study examines how certain colleges and universities in the U.S. uniquely contribute to the fabric of American society. In order to understand this contribution, this study seeks to understand the institutional identity of your campus and how that identity informs the institution’s conceptualization of “community” and “public good.” Furthermore, this study aims to understand how your institution’s community engagement benefits the larger public.

PROCEDURES
During this interview, you will be asked questions about the your perceptions of the campus culture and identity, along with questions about how the campus culture and identity inform the institution’s conception of community and public good. With your permission, I will audirecord this interview so that I have an accurate record of our conversation. When I transcribe the interview and/or engage the services of a transcriber, and I will assign a pseudonym to you so you are not identifiable. I will forward a copy of the transcript to you for your amendment and comment. Once the study has been completed, I will destroy all recordings and transcriptions.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
This study has minimal risks. It is possible that you might experience discomfort in answering some of the questions. Because your participation in this study is voluntary, you do not need to respond to any questions that make you uncomfortable. In addition, you may choose to end your participation in this study at any time.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR SOCIETY
Participants may gain personal insights about how they have benefited from the unique environments in which they live, work, and learn. The responses of all interview participants may help higher education scholars, administrators, and policy makers understand whether certain types of colleges and universities make unique contributions to the public good that are related to their institutional identities. Furthermore, this study may answer questions about whether accreditation agencies adequately take into account the benefits of having diverse institutional types. Finally, this study may have implications for the way we understand democracy, which requires that citizens have access to full participation in the social and political fabric of the nation.

CONFIDENTIALITY
I will not notify anyone that you are participating in this study and the recording of this interview will be available only to me and to a paid transcriber. Any transcriber hired to assist with interview transcription will not be given your name. The final transcription will be available only to me. Your full name will not be included in the audio recording or attached to the transcript. If you wish, you may listen to the audio recording and subsequently request exclusion of specific
information from the study. Personally identifying information will be kept confidential and disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Any data included in future publications and presentations will not be attributed to you and personally identifying information will be excluded. Audio recordings and transcripts will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
You may stop the interview at any time and you can withdraw from the study at any time today or in the future. Your decision not to participate in the study will not result in any negative repercussions from me.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS
If you have any questions, you may contact me at any time at lmillora@ucla.edu. You may also contact my advisor and dissertation chair, Dr. Robert A. Rhoads, Professor of Education at rhoads@gseis.ucla.edu.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
You may withdraw your consent at any time or discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you wish to ask questions about your rights as a research participant or if you wish to voice any problems or concerns you may have about the study to someone other than the researchers, please call the Office of the Human Research Protection Program at (310) 825-7122 or write to Office of the Human Research Protection Program, UCLA, 11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 102, Box 951694, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT
I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

________________________________________
Name of Participant (Print)

________________________________________
Signature of Participant Date

________________________________________
Signature of Researcher Date

APPENDIX L

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction and Consent Process
My name is Lisa Millora and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Higher Education and Organizational Change program at UCLA’s Graduate School of Education & Information Studies at UCLA. Before we get started, I’d like to go over some important information about your participation in this study.

To begin, I would like you to review this information sheet about the research study and I will give you a few minutes to confirm that you are interested in participating. If you are, I’ll ask you to sign two copies so that I can have a copy and you can take a copy with you. [Give participant a few minutes to review the consent form. If any participant wishes to review the consent form in advance of the interview, I will send it via email.]

Let me briefly go over a few key points from the information sheet.
1. Answer only the questions you are comfortable answering. If you do not want to discuss a particular question, just let me know and we will move on to the next question.
2. You can end your participation in this study at any time. If you wish to end the interview, you can do so without any negative repercussions.
3. I would like to record the interview and when I transcribe the interview or reference it in any manuscript, I will use a pseudonym for you. You have the right to listen to the audio recording of the interview before it is deleted and at any time you can tell me not to use a particular part of this interview. I will also destroy all recordings and transcriptions upon completion of the study.
4. Do you have any questions? [Answer questions. Then ask participant to sign the consent forms, give one to the participant, and keep one for research records.]

Interview Portion
Relax and treat this as a conversation in which there are no right or wrong answers.

Institutional Mission
• Why did you choose this institution?
• What is the “sales pitch” version of this institution’s mission?
  • How does that reflect or conflict with your experience here?
  • Can you share an experience or story that can help me understand that experience?
• How did you learn about the institution’s mission?
• What aspects of the mission are important to you (personally)?
  • How do you think the rest of the campus perceives the mission?
  • Where on campus do you see conflict around the mission?
• What are the values of this institution?

Role-Specific Questions
Administrators and Faculty
• What are your most important responsibilities in terms of carrying out the institution’s mission?
• To what extent are you successful in advancing the institution’s mission?
• What challenges do you encounter in advancing the institution’s mission? What are some of the ways the institution supports the mission?
• How do you want your alumni to engage in society after leaving this institution? Is that what is happening?
• How does your professional work fit in with the mission? What aspects of the mission are important to your work?

Students
• What activities and opportunities do you participate in that reflect its mission and values?
• How do they reflect the mission and values?
• What makes this institution unique in your mind?
• Has your educational experience affected what you plan to do after college?

Community and Engagement
• Many campuses talk about service to the community. What community does this institution prioritize?
• In what ways does the institution demonstrate its commitment to serving this community?
• Are there other communities that this school thinks are important?
• Is there another way that this institution would describe the institution’s “community”?
• In what ways does the institution demonstrate its commitment to serving those communities?
• What formal structures are in place to promote engagement with these communities?

Public Good
• Most institutions talk about the importance of the public good. What does “public good” mean at this institution?
• In what ways do you think this institution contributes to the public good?
• How does your campus promote a sense of responsibility to the public good?
• What unique contributions does your institution make to the public good?
• What contributions do you make to the public good?
• How has being here (teaching, working, studying) changed your perception of “community” and “public good”?

Outsiders’ Perceptions
• When you tell people you [teach at, work at, attend] this institution, what do people assume goes on here? What assumptions do they make about the institution? How do you respond?
• What are some of the criticisms you hear about the characteristics that are unique to this institution? How do you respond?

Other
• Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank the participant for his/her participation in the interview and his/her contribution to the study. Give participant business card and invite him/her to contact me with any questions.
APPENDIX M

CONTACT SUMMARY FORM

(Adapted from Miles & Huberman, 1994)

Campus/Site: ________________________________

Type of Contact

Informal/formal interview (circle one)

Who Location Date

Other type of contact

Who Location Date

1. What were the main issues or themes that struck you in this contact?

2. Summarize information obtained (or not obtained) for each section of the interview protocol.

3. What observations about this contact seemed salient, interesting, illuminating, or important?

4. What are new or remaining target questions in considering the next contact at this site?

5. Preliminary notes relating to data analysis or emerging themes
REFERENCES


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