HIGHER EDUCATION POLITICS & ECONOMICS

Volume 8, Issue 1

Editors-in-Chief
Kim Bullington, Ph.D. and William Nuckols, Ph.D.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

https://ojed.org/index.php/hepe

Peer-Reviewed Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 8, Issue 1 (2022), pp. 2-32
ISSN: 2162-3104 (Print), 2166-3750 (Online)
doi: 10.32674/hepe.v8i1.4497
ojed.org/hepe

Relationship Between Alternative Revenue Strategies and Graduation Rates for U.S. Public Higher Education

Caroline Wekullo
Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya

ABSTRACT

State support for higher education has been volatile, prompting public universities to pursue alternative revenue sources to supplement state support. While dependence on alternative revenue sources has been raising, the relationship between these revenue sources and graduation rates has not been examined in depth. This study used panel data from 2012-2018 to examine how alternative revenue sources related to graduation rates by institution type and student race. The results show that the associations among alternative revenue sources and graduation rates varied by institution type and racial group. The results also showed that relying on alternative revenue other than state funding may negatively influence graduation rates for all student racial groups. The discussion and implications for practice are presented.

Keywords: higher education, graduation rates, strategies of revenue sources, state funding, students' racial groups

For many reasons, improving completion rates at U.S. public institutions of higher education has become a focus of the government. These reasons range from social and economic benefits to the importance of a highly educated population (Bailey & Xu, 2012; Carnevale et al., 2016; Deming, 2017; Pike & Robbins, 2020). However, despite increasing levels of enrollment, completion rates have remained low across the country (Matthew & Powell, 2016). Factors such as students' level of college readiness, individual ability, and socio-economic background, as well as institutional characteristics and the cost of higher education, have all been found to contribute to students' level of persistence and rate of completion (Morrison, 2012; Pike & Robbins, 2020; Titus, 2009; Zhang, 2009). Research has shown that state funding is a crucial determinant of graduation rate (Chen, 2020; Zhang, 2009). However, trends in state support for higher education show it to be unpredictable and generally in decline (Delaney & Doyle, 2018; Long, 2016; Noll, 2010; State Higher Education Executive Officers Association [SHEEO], 2017; Tandberg, 2008; Zumeta, 2004, 2018). Moreover, with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education institutions (HEIs) are likely to experience more precarious financial situations than at any time in history due to the decline in their other primary revenue sources and net tuition revenue (Laderman, & Heckert, 2021).

Studies of future trends in state support for higher education have indicated that state funding is unlikely to normalize any time soon, especially with increasing competition from Medicare, corrections [prisons], and K-12 education (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019; Zumeta, 2010, 2018). In times of financial difficulty, higher education is used as a balance wheel for state budgets. Research has shown that in good times, however, states do not fund institutions back to the level they were before cuts were made, or if they do, it is at a slower pace (Doyle & Delaney, 2009, 2011; Laderman, & Heckert, 2021; SHEEO, 2018; Zumeta, 2018). This lack of stability in financial support makes planning difficult, as HEIs cannot know what funds to expect from the state. This uncertainty in state support may also have significant implications for institutional planning, and consequently, negatively affect students' completion rates. HEIs often struggle to implement long-term plans (Delaney & Doyle, 2018; Doyle et al., 2018; Laderman & Heckert, 2021; Tandberg, 2008) and meet the public's demand for productivity (Delaney & Doyle, 2011; Lacy et al., 2017). As a result, some public HEIs have resorted to cost-saving and efficiency measures such as reducing administrative layers, sharing faculty and services, embracing system-wide collaboration, and increasing tuition and

fees to garner more financial support (American Academy of Arts and Sciences [AAAS], 2016; Hanover Research, 2020; Weerts & Ronca, 2016; Wekullo & Musoba, 2020).

Since state funding alone cannot generate adequate sums, public universities have actively begun pursuing alternative revenue sources to supplement state support (Cheslock & Gianneschi, 2008; Navas, 2020; Noll, 2010). These revenue sources include commercializing intellectual property, pricing services, soliciting endowments and charitable giving, and collaborating with other research organizations (AAAS, 2015; Hanover Research, 2020; Hearn, 2003, 2006; Wekullo & Musoba, 2020). It is unclear, however, the extent to which these revenue sources contribute to institutions' graduation rates. In addition, there are increasing concerns that depending on revenues from private partnerships may drive the institutional expenditure away from their core mandate of teaching, research, and community service towards contractual obligations (Fowles, 2014). Moreover, the change in revenue pattern is not only likely to cause changes in the expenditure pattern, but it can cause changes to student cohort, as well. Furthermore, studies examining the nexus between revenue sources and graduation rates are limited, especially those analyzing the issue by institution type and racial group. Thus, the present research examines whether different revenue sources are associated with graduation rates and if there is a relationship, whether it varies by institution type and student race.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on the relationship between revenue sources for public higher education and student outcomes. Studies have demonstrated the need to increase college graduation rates at a national level. As graduation rates hold a critical place in institutional research and public policy discussions and decision making (Pike & Robbins, 2020). However, this goal cannot be achieved without increasing the rate at which racial minority students obtain postsecondary degrees. Moreover, improving graduation rates can be especially challenging in a financial environment in which state appropriations are at best uncertain. Given the decline in state funding and the various revenue strategies institutions have begun to implement, it is important to examine the relationships among particular strategies for increasing revenue and students' graduation rates by racial group, as well as the extent to which revenue sources affect graduation rates at different institutions. This is because of the fears that depending more on revenue from alternative sources and mainly that from private partnerships may change institutions' expenditures, which can further change the focus of institutional activities towards private obligations.

RELATED LITERATURE

Uncertainty in state support for public higher education coupled with spiraling costs for equipment and resources have resulted in the need to identify, enhance, and manage revenue sources serving as alternatives to government appropriations. Earlier studies have shown that public universities have begun to actively seek alternative sources of revenue (AAAS, 2015; Cheslock & Gianneschi, 2008; Lynch, 2018; Navas, 2020). These include commercializing research activities (Hanover Research, 2020; Hearn, 2003; Minh & Van, 2022; Navas, 2020; Page & John, 2019; Slaughter & Rhodes, 2004), expanding the pool of donor funding (Hanover Research, 2020), and increasing net tuition and fees (Delaney & Doyle, 2011; Desrochers &Wellman, 2011; Ehrenberg, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2019). Increasing the number of out-of-state students allowed to enroll (Hearn & Warshaw, 2015; Navas, 2020) and changing the mode of instruction delivery (Deming et al., 2015; Dietrich, 2015; Navas, 2020; Paddick, 2017) are other alternative revenue streams higher education institutions have turned to in times of financial difficulty. However, how these alternative revenue sources relate to the graduation rate has been a concern of many stakeholders. Because some of these revenue sources are restricted and can neither directly be used to fund student services nor be tied to a specific racial group. Thus, this research explores the relationship between revenue sources and graduation rates and how the relationships vary by institution type and student racial groups.

One of the alternative sources of income for universities is research funds. While there may not be a direct relationship between research revenue and completion rates, research funds provide an opportunity for students to engage socially and academically, which is vital for their staying to completion. For instance, Gregerman et al. (1998) used a sample of 1,280 freshman and sophomore minority students to examine the relationship between research revenue and student outcomes and found that engaging students in research increased completion rates among Hispanic and White students. Gregerman et al.'s (1998) study also found that engaging students in research activities improved retention for below-average Black students who took part in the program. Similarly, Hathaway et al. (2002), Lopatto (2004), and Rodenbusch et al. (2016) found that engaging undergraduate students in funded research projects and research-based courses improved completion rates and enrollment in postgraduate programs. Although Hearn (2003) noted that revenue from research was neither cost-effective nor predictable, other studies suggest that involving students in research activities meant to generate revenue could improve graduation rates (Gregerman et al.,1998;

Hathaway et al., 2002; Lopatto, 2004; Tinto, 1987). Further, Tinto (1987) explained that while the research grand may not directly cause an increase in students' graduation rate, it is that ability of the research projects to integrate students socially, academically, and to keep them engaged, that is more likely to retain the students to completion. The current study hypothesizes that revenue from research is likely to increase the graduation rate and the effect may vary by institution type and student racial group.

A considerable body of research has found that whenever state appropriations are lower, then the higher the tuition and fees the students will pay (Gordon & Hedlund, 2017; Laderman & Heckert, 2021; SHEEO, 2016). Further, research has shown that tuition and fees has consistently served as a fallback when institutions face financial constraints (Desrochers & Hurlburt, 2016; Leslie et al., 2012; Navas, 2020; SHEEO, 2016; Teixeira & Koryakina, 2013; Webb, 2015; Zumeta, 2018). This suggests that net tuition and fees, especially from international students, graduate, and out-of-state students (Paddick, 2017; Navas, 2020), have become significant sources of revenue for most public institutions. A report by SHEEO (2017) indicated that in 2017 more than 28 states primarily relied on tuition revenue to fund higher education, despite there being an increase in state support. According to SHEEO (2017), net tuition comprised over 50% of these 28 states' educational revenue. That year was the first in which more than half of the states relied on tuition rather than state funding (SHEEO, 2017).

Earlier research on the effects of raising net tuition on student outcomes has been inconsistent. Some studies have found that increasing net tuition and fees increased students' unmet financial needs, negatively influencing graduation rates, especially for lower-income students (Delaney & Doyle, 2014; Long, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2019; Tandberg, 2008; Titus, 2006). Conversely, Titus (2006) found that an increase in tuition was positively associated with an increase in the graduation rate. This finding suggests that institutions are either strategizing to offer efficient and high-quality services and thus are retaining students, or students are motivating themselves to persist throughout their education (Heck et al., 2014). The current study hypothesizes that an increase in tuition and fees is likely to hurt students' graduation rate and the effect may vary by institution type and racial groups.

In times of crisis, universities use revenue from auxiliary services such as vending, dining amenities, and facilities to supplement their income. However, most of these are greatly affected by social, economic, political, and educational matters, and it is infrequent that they generate any significant income (Rullman et al., 2008). While research has examined the relationship between auxiliary services and graduation rates, such studies are few. Hamrick et al. (2004) used a combination of multiple regression, bivariate regression, and a hierarchical model to analyze data from four-year public institutions across the 50 states, testing the effects of various institutional characteristics on graduation rates and finding that institutions with engaging programs (i.e., medical, dental, and veterinary programs) had higher rates of completion, after controlling for predictors such as the institution's classification, location, and level of selectivity. While having programs, such as medical, dental, and veterinary alone may not directly improve student completion, it is the aspect of these programs to integrate students socially and academically in their institutions that is more likely to retain the students to completion (Tinto, 1987). The current study hypothesizes that institutions with activities related to generating revenue are more likely to increase their students' graduation rates. The effects may vary by institution type and by racial group.

Regarding endowments, Titus (2006) found that college completion was positively associated with the wealth of the institution. Wealthy institutions with high institutional expenditures per FTE have the ability to invest more in education-related activities that foster increased access and persistence in all students, including those from low-income backgrounds. Titus suggested a future study examining the "extent to which changes over time in the distribution of institutional wealth and expenditures per FTE … influence … college completion rates by social class" (p. 395). Among other variables, the current study examines the relationship between institutional wealth as measured by endowments and other revenue sources and completion rates. The hypothesis is that endowment would positively influence graduation rates and the effect may vary by institution type and racial groups.

State Environmental Context

According to Heck et al. (2014), the environmental context of the state includes factors related to trends in state support for higher education, their economic context, certain political factors, and state demographics. Earlier studies have shown that the level of state support for higher education depends on the economic situation of that state, such as the per capita income, gross state product, and changes in business cycles (Delaney & Doyle, 2007, 2011, 2018; Doyle et al., 2018; Hovey, 1999; Lacy et al., 2017; Tandberg & Ness, 2011; Zumeta, 2004, 2017, 2018). Historically, state appropriations have comprised the largest portion of the operating budgets of state institutions of higher education (Laderman & Heckert, 2021; Zumeta, 2004).

Several studies have explored the relationship between changes in funding and completion rates, reporting a significant positive correlation between state appropriations and schools' rates of graduation (Heck et al., 2014;

Shin, 2010; Titus, 2009; Zhang, 2009). For instance, Zhang (2009) used the Integrated Post-secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) panel data from 1997 to 2004 to analyze the relationship between state appropriations and graduation rates at four-year public institutions, finding that a 10% increase in state appropriations per full-time equivalent student in a public university was associated with a 0.64% increase in graduation rate, after controlling for other predictors. Similarly, Titus (2009) showed that changes in state funding positively influenced bachelor's degree attainment, after controlling for state- and institution-level factors. The latter study, however, did not include data on individual institutional characteristics, which may uniquely contribute to the graduation rate. The current study, also, considered state appropriation as one of the independent variables in the model and examined how state appropriation together with other variables influence the graduation rates.

The state's economic condition, such as the per capita personal income, unemployment rate, and percentage of the population of college age (i.e., 18 to 24 years) were all found to likely influence the level of state funding (Lowry, 2001; McLendon et al., 2014). As Lowry (2001), McLendon et al. (2014), and Tandberg (2010) all noted, a weaker economy is associated with higher unemployment rates and may incentivize legislators to allocate less funding to public higher education. Regarding the proportion of the population of college age, research has found that both increases and decreases can influence the level of state funding. Toutkoushian and Hollis (1998) determined that an increase in this population may trigger more state support. Conversely, a decrease could cause a decline.

Institutional Characteristics

Researchers have found institutions of higher education to differ in terms of variables such as mission, level of selectivity, amount of financial aid, composition of the student body, number of faculty, amounts of expenditures, and size and setting (Chen, 2013; Crisp et al., 2018; Heck et al., 2014; Morrison, 2012; Pike & Robbins, 2020; Titus, 2006). The impacts of these features on graduation outcomes also differ. For instance, Morrison (2012) used logistic regression on a 2003 to 2004 sample of 661,485 full-time equivalent students establishing that institutional characteristics have a positive significant effect on graduation outcomes. Further, Morrison (2006) also found that the percentage of students receiving Pell grants and average SAT scores positively influenced graduation outcomes, while college size (i.e., the number of students enrolled) and expenditures per FTE were only moderately correlated to graduation outcomes, as the effect size was medium. Likewise, these variables are included in the model examining the relationship between the revenue sources and graduation rates at public 4-year institutions.

Earlier studies have been inconsistent regarding the relationship between graduation rates and institutional expenditures on academic activities, student support, and services. For instance, Webber and Ehrenberg (2010) found that allocating funding to non-educational expenditures enhanced persistence and graduation rates. The effect was greater in institutions with lower graduation rates than in those with already high graduation and persistence rates. The authors also found that increased instructional and research expenditures led to lower graduation rates. Conversely, Gansemer-Topf and Schuh (2006) argued that institutional expenditures related to students' academic integration, such as those for instruction, academic support, student services, facilities, institutional support, and grants were positively associated with increased graduation rates. However, Gansemer-Topf and Schuh's (2006) study focused on private institutions which do not receive state appropriations. In different studies, Pike and Robbins (2020) and Crisp et al. (2018) found that investing revenue in institutional expenditures for instruction, academic support, student services, and institutional revenue positively increased graduation rates. Similarly, the current study included these institutional variables in the model to examine whether the change in revenue pattern changes the expenditure and graduation rates and whether the effect varies by institution type and students by racial groups.

Research has also shown that a high level of selectivity is positively related to the graduation rate (Gansemer-Topf & Schuh, 2006; Heck et al., 2014). Heck et al. (2014) found that institutional variables such as being highly ranked according to the Carnegie classification and high percentage of full-time faculty affect student academic experiences, and together with other variables, such as tuition and fees and high first-year retention rate all influenced the rate at which students graduated. Schools with higher enrollment also had higher retention and graduation rates (Pike, 2013; Ryan, 2004).

Student body characteristics, such as the percentage of minority students, percentage of in-state students, and SAT scores at the 25th and 75th percentiles were all found to be strongly associated with completion rate (Gansemer-Topf & Schuh, 2005, 2006; Millea et al., 2018; Zhang, 2009). Specifically, students with higher admissions test scores or students who were academically prepared were more likely to persist to completion, as compared to those with lower scores (Gansemer-Topf & Schuh, 2005). Moreover, students who received grants or scholarships had higher retention and graduation rates (Millea et al., 2018). Likewise, this study included these factors as they had shown to have the potential to influence the graduation rate. This study also examined whether the effect of student body

characteristics: the percentage of minority students, percentage of in-state students, and mean SAT Composite score, would vary by institution type and by student racial group.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The conceptual framework for this study drew from two bodies: resource dependence theory and prior research. First, resource dependence theory, proposed by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), has long been a premier framework for understanding the relationship between an organization and its environment. The theory has three key aspects that relate to higher education institutions: the environment in which the organizations operate, power, and strategy. The theory postulates that the environment provides critical resources the organization needs to continue functioning. When resources are not provided, the ability of the organization to function may be endangered. Within the environment, there is *power and control* within and outside the organization. In this case, *power and control* refer to factors that have the ability to force numerous policies and decisions upon universities. The strategy refers to the actions and structures institutions put in place to survive in the existing environment and the power and control within and outside the organization which influences the outcomes. In this case, higher education institutions depend on state financial support for operations. When the state support declines or becomes uncertain, public higher education institutions may experience difficulties achieving their functions. As a result, institutions of higher learning may opt for alternative sources of revenue to continue with their operations, which is the case in the current study. There is no doubt that revenue from private partnerships may change the institutional expenditures as well drift their core function towards private obligations. The theory guides the choice of key variables in the study and grounds the institutions' decisions to seek for alternative sources of funding.

Second, two bodies of research have been used in framing the conceptual framework: (a) literature on strategies that institutions of higher education employ to obtain revenue in times of financial difficulty and how those sources relate to graduation rate, and (b) the factors contributing to graduation rate. From these strands of literature, three core factors appeared to account for variations in the level of state support for higher education institutions: 1) economic context of the state (i.e., state appropriations, net tuition and fees, research funding, endowment income, and income from private auxiliary services), 2) state demography (i.e., per capita personal income, percentage unemployment in state, and the percentage of the population that is college going age), and 3) institutional and student characteristics (i.e. type of institution, selectivity, enrollment scaled by FTE, expenditure on academic and student services, and full-time employee – 100FTE). The model is an appropriate fit for the study as it summarizes the focal variables in the study, the control variables and how they related with the dependent variable- graduation rate. This current study tests the framework that posits a relationship between graduation rates and revenue sources, controlling for economic, demographic, and institutional factors, as shown in Figure 1.

METHOD

The data for this study were drawn from several sources: the Delta Cost Project Dataset, IPEDS, US Census Bureau, and US Bureau of Economic Analysis. The researcher used a panel dataset of 2012 to 2018 data for 476 public four-year public institutions consisting of eight cohorts (a total of 4,284 observations) in the analysis. Except for percentage and categorical variables, the researcher computed a natural logarithm for each variable to model the linear relationship, reduce sensitivity to institutional type, and simplify the interpretation. Table 1 presents a detailed summary of the variables.

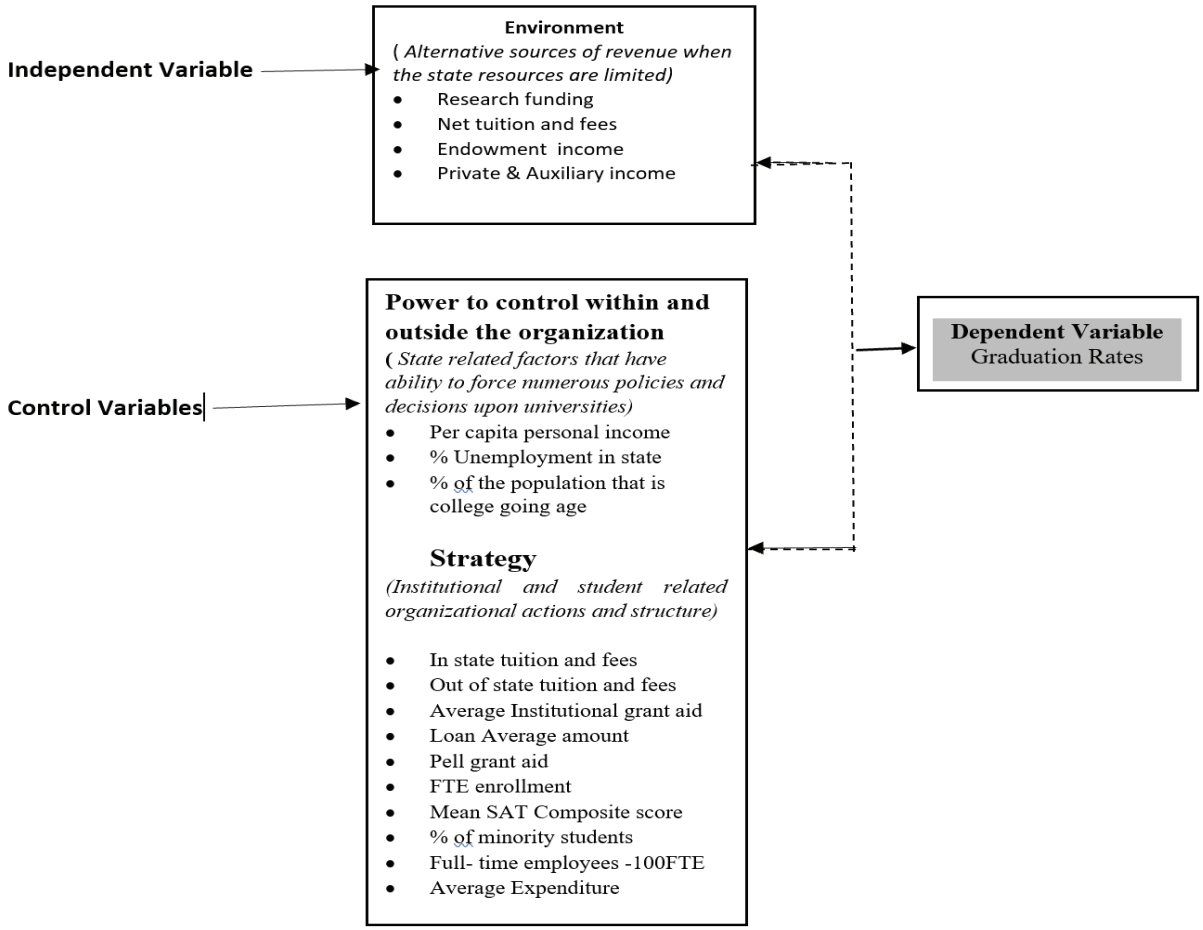
Description of the Variables

The researcher used the six-year cohort graduation rate for a bachelor's degree (within 150% of the normal time of completion) as the dependent variable. To examine the relationships among race and strategies for obtaining revenue, the researcher included the race-specific graduation rates for minority students (i.e., Black, Hispanic, and Native American) in the analysis as dependent variables. Graduation rate is an accountability measure (Titus, 2009) mainly used as an indicator of performance and productivity (Titus, 2006; Zhang, 2009), as well as a measure of institutional quality (Mitchell et al., 2017). Although the measure has been criticized for not reflecting the quality of graduates, it is still considered the most relevant measure, as data are readily available and easily understood by stakeholders, especially policymakers (Heck et al., 2014).

The primary independent variables include the following strategies for obtaining revenue: (a) net tuition, or revenue received from students after excluding institutional student aid; (b) research, or funding received from private and corporate sources and state, local, and federal funding in the form of grants and contracts specifically meant for research; (c) endowment income, or investment income from trusts held by others on behalf of the university

Figure 1

The Conceptual Framework: The Variables and the Relationship Identified from Theory and Literature.



and funds related to endowments; and (d) private and auxiliary income, or income received from auxiliary enterprise operations such as residence halls, food services, athletics, hospitals, and revenue from private or public sources for non-research services (adjusted from Desrochers & Hurlburt, 2014). The researcher also included total revenue from state and local appropriations variables in the model.

As Scott et al. (2006) and Bailey and Xu (2012) suggested, several control variables related to the state economic context (i.e., per capita personal income, unemployment rate, and percentage of the population of college age) and institutional characteristics (i.e., selectivity as measured by SAT score percentiles, financial aid, student body composition, number of part-time faculty, expenditures, and size as measured by enrollment) were also included in the model. The state economic variables were included to capture the state economic factors that influence changes

Table 1: Variables and Sources in the Study

Variables	Description	Source
6 Year Graduation rate (All)	6-year cohort graduation rates for bachelor's degree (within 150% of normal time (All)	Delta Cost Project Database https://www.deltacostproject.org/delta-cost-project-database
Hispanic student graduation rate	6-year cohort graduation rates for Hispanic (within 150% of normal time	IPEDS
Black student graduation rate	6-year cohort graduation rates for Black (within 150% of normal time	IPEDS
Native American graduation rate	6-year cohort graduation rates for American Indians (within 150% of normal time	IPEDS
Revenue (Lagged)		***Delta Cost Project (used for all revenue variables)*** https://www.deltacostproject.org/delta-cost-project-database
State and local appropriation Per FTE	Revenue from state and local appropriation	
Net tuition and fees	Revenue from net tuition and fees	
Research funding	Revenue from federal, grants and contracts and state and local grants and contracts	
Endowment income	Revenue from private gifts, return from investment and income from endowment	
Private and auxiliary income	Revenue from sales of education activities, auxiliary enterprises, and others (i.e., hospitals, independent operations, and other sources)	
In-state tuition and fees	The tuition charged by institutions to full-time undergraduate students who meet the state's or institution's residency requirements.	
Out of state tuition and fees	Amount of money charged to an out-of-state full-time undergraduate student by an institution that covers tuition and required fees.	
Institutional grant aid	institutional grant spent on student grants	
State/local grant aid	Expenditures for scholarships and fellowships funded by the state and local governments.	
Loan average amount	Average amount of student loans received by first-time, full-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates	

Table 1 (continued)

Variables	Description	Source
State Factors		
Pell Grant aid (log)	Amount of Pell grant to students in form of Finance-scholarships & fellowships	
FTE Enrollment	Total Full Tine enrollment	
Mean SAT composite score	Scholastic assessment test (SAT) Composite percentile score	
% minority students***	Percentage sum of (Native American, Black, and Hispanic) to the total enrollment	Calculated based on Delta Cost Database
Full-time Employees-100 FTE	The number of all full-time employees per 100 FTE students.	
Carnegie Classification	4 Year institution Type. Doctoral= 1; Masters =2; Bachelor =3	
Expenditure	Expenditures for academic and instructional support and student services	
Per capita personal income	Per capita personal income by state by year U.S.	Bureau of Economic Analysis. State annual personal income. Regional Economic Information System http://www.bea.gov/regional/spi/default.cfm?satable
% Unemployment in state	State Unemployment rate by the year	Bureau of Labor Statistics. Local area unemployment
% of the population that is college going age	Percentage of the population that is College going age (18 to 24-year-old)	U.S. Census Bureau. Selected age groups by states archives http://www.census.gov/popest/archives

in state funding as well as funding to higher education institutions. In addition, control variables relating to institutional and student service characteristics were included in the analysis. These variables were included to capture other financial pressures that may influence student retention and graduation. It was assumed that a percentage increase in income from revenue sources would be associated with an increase in graduation rate by institution type and racial groups.

To capture differences in graduation rates by institution type, the researcher categorized public four-year institutions into three groups, according to the Carnegie 2010 classification: research/doctorate-, master's degree-, and bachelor's degree-awarding institutions. Previous studies have found different types of institutions to have unique features that could either positively or negatively be associated with graduation rates. Data on these variables were extracted from the Delta Cost Project Database. Table 2 presents a summary of the descriptive statistics for the variables in this study.

Analytical Model

A fixed effects model was used to determine the relationships among revenue strategies and graduation rates. This technique allowed the researcher to estimate the variations within an institution over time, control for unobserved variables, and approximate time-invariant variables. Closely related studies examining the effects of changes in state appropriations on either alternative revenue sources (Cheslock & Gianneschi, 2008; Jasquette & Curs, 2015) or student outcomes (Heck et al., 2014; Sanford & Hunter, 2011; Zhang, 2009) have also used fixed effects regression. A time lag of six years was factored into the model to allow for the effects of variations in the predictor and control variables.

To estimate the relationships among revenue strategies and graduation rates, a fixed effects model was specified:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_{0i} + \beta_{01}X_{it1} + \beta_{02}\,X_{it2} \ldots\ldots\ldots + \beta_{0k}\,X_{itk} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

where Y_{it} is the dependent variable, i represents the institutions and t is the time, β_{0i} is the intercept, X_{it1} is one independent variable (e.g., net tuition and fees) and X_{it2} is the second control variable in the model. The β_{01} variable indicates the coefficients for the first independent variable (i.e., net tuition and fees), β_{02} indicates the coefficients for the second control variable in the model, similarly, β_{0k} indicates a vector of variables up to k number of variables and X_{itk} indicates the coefficients up to k. The variable ε_{it} is the error term.

The researcher estimated several fixed effects models. For instance, to examine the relationships between revenue strategies and graduation rates by racial group, the researcher ran four models. Model 1 tested the relationship between revenue sources and all student racial groups, Model 2 tested the relationship between revenue sources and the graduation rate of Hispanic students, Model 3 tested the relationship between revenue sources and the graduation rate of Black students, and Model 4 tested the relationship between revenue sources and the graduation rate of Native American students. Table 3 presents the analysis.

To determine the influence of various revenue sources on graduation rates by institution type, the researcher ran three models. Model 5 tested the fixed effects for doctoral institutions only, Model 6 tested the fixed effects for master's institutions, and Model 7 for baccalaureate institutions (see Table 3). It was hypothesized that revenue strategies would be negatively associated with graduation rates.

Several diagnostic tests related to the fixed effects models were conducted. The result of the Hausman test for whether to use fixed or random effects was statistically significant, indicating that using fixed effects was the most preferable [$\chi 2$ (22) = 265.54, p = 0.0017] (Torres-Reyna, 2007). The Breusch-Pagan test for heteroskedasticity assumption was violated [$\chi 2$ (384) = 8.6e + 33, $p < 0.001$]. The robust option was used in the analysis to obtain heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. Also, a Lagrangian multiplier test for random effects was run to determine whether group effects were present in the data (Breusch & Pagan, 1980). The results showed that residuals were highly correlated over time, indicating that the fixed effects model was better for obtaining unbiased estimates.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	SD	Min	Max
6 Year Graduation rate (All)	0.48	0.17	0.03	100
Hispanic student graduation rate	0.09	0.187	0.00	100
Black student graduation rate	0.09	0.197	0.00	100
Native American graduation rate	0.07	0.16	0.00	100
Primary predictors -Revenue (Lagged)				
State and local appropriations FTE	7286.82	3488.9	32.87	27003.08
Net tuition and fees	6267.75	2539.7	323.61	20447.11
Research funding	8250	18800	316986.6	249000
Endowment income	2110	6900	-6626459	124000
Private and auxiliary income	11600	32200	29943.26	332000
Control Variables: Institution and Student Factors - (Lagged)				
In-state tuition and fees	4692.85	2147.54	70.57	18628.62
Out of state tuition and fees	12958.87	4859.90	70.57	37747.12
Average Institutional grant aid	3080.34	1629.21	85.57	13878.73
Loan Average amount	4364.98	1035.22	677.68	11251.92
Pell grant aid	1182.83	678.56	68.00	8792.25
FTE enrollment	1591.79	5455.27	263.57	101282.4
Mean SAT Composite score	487.14	114.6	94.38	675.63
% of minority students	21.93	22.81	1.21	96.11
Full-time employees – 100 FTE	13.44	7.38	1.54	66.14
Average Expenditure	7540	11100	1411620	141000
State Factors				
Per capita personal income	34480.68	12760.78	8093.03	67588.55
% Unemployment rate	5.60	3.17	0.6	21.83
% of the population that is college going age	15.13	4.46	4.63	25.7

Note: The variables are inflated into 2013 dollars using the CPI-U Scala. The units for Net tuition and fees, Research funding, Endowment income, Private and auxiliary income, Average Expenditure, and Total revenue are in 10,000s.

RESULTS

The results of the findings are presented in two sections: the relationships among funding strategies and graduation rates by racial group and the relationships among revenue strategies and graduation rate by institution type.

The Relationships Between Funding Strategies and Graduation Rates by Racial Group

Table 4 presents the results of the relationships among funding strategies and graduation rates by racial group. Model 1 examined the effect of funding strategies on all racial groups. The fixed effects results show that revenue from state and local appropriations was significant and positively associated with an increase in graduation rate, all other factors in the model being held constant. A one-point percent increase in state and local appropriations was associated with a 2.6% higher graduation rate. The results also show that state and local appropriations were positively and significantly associated with the graduation rates of Hispanic, Black, and Native American students (Models 2, 3, and 4, respectively). A one-point percent increase in state and local appropriations was associated with a 6.8% higher graduation rate for Hispanic students, 6.5% higher graduation rate for Native American students, and 12.3% higher graduation rate for Black students, all other factors in the model being held constant.

Regarding net tuition and fees, the results of the fixed effects analysis in Model 1 show that net tuition and fees were significantly negatively associated with the graduation rates of all racial groups (see Model 1), all other factors in the model being held constant. A one-point percent increase in net tuition was associated with a 0.9% decrease in graduation rate. Similarly, net tuition and fees was significantly negatively associated with the graduation rates for Native American (see Model 3) and Black students (see Model 4); A one-point percent increase in net tuition and fees was associated with 24.7% and 22.6% decreases in graduation rates for each group, respectively, all other factors in the model held constant. Conversely, the results show that the net tuition and fees strategy was not significantly associated with the graduation rate of Hispanic students (see Model 2).

Table 3: Diversifying and Graduation Rates by Type of Institution

Parameter	Doctoral Model 5		Masters Model 6		Bachelor's Model 7	
Primary predictors -Revenue(lagged)	Coef	(S.E)	Coef	(S.E)	Coef	(S.E)
State and local appropriations FTE (log)	.901***	(.26)	2.86 ***	(.40)	.91	(.68)
Net tuition and fees(log)	-1.28*	(.55)	-.16	(.42)	-.98	(1.01)
Research funding(log)	-1.08	(.56)	-2.58***	(.25)	-.22	(.55)
Endowment income(log)	-.34 **	(.12)	-.28*	(.08)	-.01	(.22)
Private and auxiliary income(log)	1.75 ***	(.45)	.55 *	(.22)	-4.93 ***	(.47)
Control Variables: Institution and Student Factors (Lagged)						
In-state tuition and fees (log)	2.49***	(.35)	-1.71**	(.5)	-7.58***	(.98)
Out-of-state tuition and fees(log)	-.28	(.36)	-.86**	(.31)	6.53 ***	(1.06)
Average Institutional grant aid (log)	-.38	(.25)	.69***	(.16)	-.80	(.54)
Loan Average amount (log)	-.98**	(.35)	1.94***	(.3)	2.77***	(.7)
Pell grant aid (log)	1.55***	(.34)	-.58*	(.27)	2.99 ***	(.67)
FTE enrollment	2.74e-06	(7.41e-06)	2.81e-05**	(1.05e-05)	1.10e-05	(2.49e-05)
Mean SAT Composite score	.32***	(4.23e-04)	.01***	(4.05e-04)	.02 ***	(1.01)
% of minority students	-.18***	(.04)	-.04	(.02)	-.05	(.05)
Full-time employees - 100FTE	-.02	(.02)	.08***	(.02)	26.11***	(.04)
Average Expenditure (log)	3.92***	(.58)	-.15	(.61)	3.03*	(1.40)
Primary predictors -Revenue(lagged)	Coef	(S.E)	Coef	(S.E)	Coef	(S.E)
State factors						
Per capita personal income(log)	.31*	(.12)	.72***	(.12)	.54	(.31)
% Unemployment rate	-.02	(.02)	-6.45**	(.02)	-.21 ***	(.06)
% of the population that is college going age	-.04*	(.02)	-.15 ***	(.14)	-9 *	(.04)
Constant	-144.59***	(13.29)	-112.49***	(11.20)	74.41 *	(22.28)
R-squared(within)	19.80		7.17		11.66	
rho	96.38		91.70		86.52	
Number of Observations	1429		2122		733	

Note: Monetary values are CPI-adjusted and expressed in 2013 dollars; Standard errors in parentheses.
Within R-square is reported in the table because in a fixed-effects model, within *r* squared is the most reliable and comparative measure. *p = 0.05. **p = 0.010. ***p = 0.001. Average expenditure means average expenditure on student academic support.

Table 4: Strategies of Revenue Sources and Graduation Rate by Race

	Doctoral		Masters		Bachelor's	
Parameter	Model 5		Model 6		Model 7	
Primary predictors -Revenue(lagged)	Coef	(S.E)	Coef	(S.E)	Coef	(S.E)
State and local appropriations FTE (log)	.901***	(.26)	2.86 ***	(.40)	.91	(.68)
Net tuition and fees(log)	-1.28*	(.55)	-.16	(.42)	-.98	(1.01)
Research funding(log)	-1.08	(.56)	-2.58***	(.25)	-.22	(.55)
Endowment income(log)	-.34 **	(.12)	-.28*	(.08)	-.01	(.22)
Private and auxiliary income(log)	1.75 ***	(.45)	.55 *	(.22)	-4.93 ***	(.47)
Control Variables: Institution and Student Factors (Lagged)						
In state tuition and fees (log)	2.49***	(.35)	-1.71**	(.5)	-7.58***	(.98)
Out of state tuition and fees(log)	-.28	(.36)	-.86**	(.31)	6.53 ***	. (1.06)
Average Institutional grant aid (log)	-.38	(.25)	.69***	(.16)	-.80	(.54)
Loan Average amount (log)	-.98**	(.35)	1.94***	(.3)	2.77***	(.7)
Pell grant aid (log)	1.55***	(.34)	-.58*	(.27)	2.99 ***	(.67)
FTE enrollment	2.74e-06	(7.41e-06)	2.81e-05**	(1.05e-05)	1.10e-05	(2.49e-05)
Mean SAT Composite score	.32***	(4.23e-04)	.01***	(4.05e-04)	.02 ***	(1.01)
% of minority students	-.18***	(.04)	-.04	(.02)	-.05	(.05)
Full-time employees -100FTE	-.02	(.02)	.08***	(.02)	26.11***	(.04)
Average Expenditure (log)	3.92***	(.58)	-.15	(.61)	3.03*	(1.40)
State factors						
Per capita personal income(log)	.31*	(.12)	.72***	(.12)	.54	(.31)
% Unemployment rate	-.02	(.02)	-6.45**	(.02)	-.21 ***	(.06)
% of the population that is college going age	-.04*	(.02)	-.15 ***	(.14)	-9 *	(.04)
Constant	-144.59***	(13.29)	-112.49***	(11.20)	74.41 *	(22.28)
R-squared(within)	19.80		7.17		11.66	
rho	96.38		91.70		86.52	
Number of Observations	1429		2122		733	

Note: Monetary values are CPI-adjusted and expressed in 2013 dollars; Standard errors in parentheses.
Within R-square is reported in the table because in a fixed-effects model, within *r* squared is the most reliable and comparative measure. *$p = 0.05$. **$p = 0.010$. ***$p = 0.001$. Average expenditure means average expenditure on student academic support.

The fixed effects results indicate that revenue from research funding was significant and negatively associated with the graduation rates of all racial groups (see Model 1), Hispanic students (see Model 2), and Black students (see Model 4). A one-point percent increase in research funding was associated with a 1.6% decrease in graduation rate for all racial groups, 1.8% decrease for Hispanic students, and 2.3% decrease for Black students, all other factors in the model being held constant. Conversely, an increase in the dependence on revenue from research was significant and positively associated with the graduation rate of Native American students (see Model 3). A one-point percent increase in research funding was associated with a 3.7% higher graduation rate, after controlling for other predictors in the model.

The results of the fixed effects analysis show that revenue from endowments was significant and negatively associated with the graduation rates for all students (see Model 1) and Native American students (see Model 3). Specifically, a one-point percent increase in endowment expenditures was associated with a 0.2% decrease in the overall graduation rates and a 0.7% decrease in the graduation rates for Native American students, all other factors in the model being held constant. Conversely, Model 2 showed that a one-point percent increase in endowment expenditures at any type of institution caused a 0.7% increase in the graduation rate for Hispanic students. Surprisingly, endowments were not significantly associated with the graduation rate for Black students.

The results of the fixed effects analysis show a varying relationship between income from private and auxiliary services and graduation rate, other factors in the model being held constant. A one-point percent increase in revenue from private and auxiliary services was associated with a 1.1% decrease in the graduation rates for all racial groups (see Model 1). Similarly, Models 2 and 3 showed that a one-point percent increase in private and auxiliary services revenue led to 4.1% and 8% decreases in the graduation rates of Hispanic and Native American students, respectively, other factors in the model being held constant. Conversely, Model 4 showed that an average increase in revenue from private and auxiliary services was associated with an 11.2% increase in the graduation rate for Black students.

Turning to the control variables in Model 1 showed that after controlling for other factors, higher average institutional grant aid, average loan amount, Pell Grant aid, mean SAT composite score, full-time employees per 100 FTE, the average expenditure on student academic support, and per capita personal income were all significant and positively associated with higher graduation rates. Conversely, factors such as higher in-state tuition and fees, FTE enrollment, percentage of minority students, unemployment rate, and percentage of the population of college age were all significant and negatively associated with graduation rate. The control variables in Models 2, 3, and 4 can be interpreted similarly.

The Relationships Between Revenue Strategies and Graduation Rate by Institution Type

Table 3 presents the fixed effects results regarding the relationships among revenue strategies and graduation rate by institution type. In Model 5, the results show that state and local appropriations were significantly and positively associated with the graduation rate for doctoral institutions, other factors in the model being held constant. A one-point percent increase in state and local appropriations led to a 0.9% increase in the graduation rate for doctoral institutions. Similarly, the results show that an average increase in state and local appropriations was associated with a 2.9% increase in the graduation rate for master's institutions, other factors in the model being held constant. Surprisingly, *state and local appropriations* were not statistically significantly associated with the graduation rate of bachelor's institutions.

The results indicate that while depending on net tuition and fees was significant and negatively related to the graduation rate for doctoral institutions, it was not statistically and significantly associated with the graduation rates for master's and bachelor's institutions, other factors in the model being held constant. A one-point percent increase in net tuition led to a 1.3% decrease in the graduation rate for doctoral institutions.

Regarding research revenue, the results from Model 6 show that a one-point percent increase in revenue from research led to a 2.6% decrease in the graduation rate for master's institutions, holding all other factors in the model constant. Conversely, research revenue was not statistically significantly associated with the graduation rates for doctoral and bachelor's institutions (see Models 5 and 7, respectively).

The fixed effects results show that revenue from endowments was significant and negatively associated with graduation rates for doctoral and master's institutions. A one-point percent increase in endowment revenue was associated with a 0.3% decrease in the graduation rates for both institutions, other factors in the model being held constant. Endowment revenue was not significant and positively associated with the graduation rate for bachelor's institutions.

Finally, Table 4 shows that while revenue from private and auxiliary services was significantly and positively associated with the graduation rates for doctoral and master's institutions, the relationship was negative for bachelor's institutions. A one-point percent increase in revenue from private and auxiliary services led to a 2% increase in the

graduation rate for doctoral institutions and a 0.6% increase for master's institutions. However, an increase in revenue from private and auxiliary services led to a 6% decrease in the graduation rate for bachelor's institutions, after controlling for other predictors (see Models 5, 6, and 7).

With regards to the control variables in Model 5, the results show that a one-point percent variation in total revenue led to a 6% increase in the graduation rate for doctoral institutions. Other control factors in the model can be interpreted similarly. The effects of the control variables on the model differed. For example, while factors such as variations in in-state tuition, Pell Grant aid, mean SAT scores, per capita personal income, and expenditures on instructional, academic, and student services were, on average, significant and positively associated with the graduation rate, other factors such as average loan amount and percentage of minority students were significantly and negatively associated with the graduation rate. The control variables in Models 6 and 7 can be interpreted similarly. It is important to note that the relationship between each control variable and the graduation rate was inconsistent across institution types. For instance, while an increase in total revenue was significantly and positively associated with graduation rates for doctoral and master's institutions, the relationship was not significant and was negatively associated with graduation rates for institutions offering bachelor's degrees.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Funding Strategies and Graduation Rates by Racial Group

These results suggest that a positive relationship between state and local appropriations and a six-year graduation period exists not only overall but also for different racial groups. The significance also varies by racial group. The greatest increase in graduation rate was with Black students, followed by Hispanic and then Native American students. Similar to earlier studies, the results of this study confirm the crucial effect that state and local appropriations have on graduation rates (Titus, 2006; Zhang, 2009). Moreover, these findings are like what Fowles (2014) found – an increasing dependency on revenues from private partnerships can drive institutional expenditures away from instructional activities towards contractual obligations.

Similar to previous studies, the results of this current research demonstrate that increases in the dependence on net tuition and fees have a negative effect on the overall graduation rate. More so, such increases may significantly harm graduation rates for minority students, specifically those who are Native American or Black. These findings have significant implications for policymakers and institutional leaders seeking to improve completion rates and reduce the gap not only in enrollment but also in the graduation rates of racial minority groups.

The finding that revenue from research was negatively associated with the overall six-year graduation rate and graduation rates for Hispanic and Black students was surprising. The explanation is likely multidimensional and reflects both institutional and academic factors. In most cases, research funding is competitive and restricted to specific research. Diverting revenue meant for research to instructional purposes may be challenging for most institutions. Partly, like Tinto (1987) found,

research grants may not directly cause an increase in students' graduation rate, it is that ability of the research projects to integrate and engage the students socially and academically that is more likely to retain the students to completion. These findings have significant implications for policymakers, demonstrating that though revenue from research may seem significant, it is meant to serve a specific function (i.e., research) and indirectly research funds are likely to assist institutions to achieve their goal of increasing graduation rates by incorporating and engaging students socially and academically. Further, the finding that revenue from research was positively associated with the six-year graduation rate for Native American students was interesting and suggests the need to examine the patterns of enrollment by racial group, and in particular, whether Native Americans participate in funded research or course-based research programs. While the results of this study contribute to the existing literature on undergraduate students and funded research, the findings suggest that more work is needed to explore the relationship between research revenue and undergraduate students' completion by racial group.

The results regarding the relationship between endowment revenue and graduation rate were not consistently significant. While the association between endowments and the graduation rate for Hispanic students was significant and positive, the relationships between endowments and the graduation rates for all Native American students were significant and negative. It is assumed that wealthy institutions with large endowments are more likely to offer financial support to their racial minority and low-income students to facilitate completion (Gershenfeld et al., 2019; Hamilton & Darity, 2017; Taylor et al., 2013; Titus, 2006; Weisbard & Ash, 2010). Thus, the findings of this study suggest that endowment revenue is not significantly associated with the overall graduation rate or those of certain racial groups such as Black and Native American students. Similar to the findings of previous studies, this present research confirms that though endowment revenue may seem substantial, it makes only a minimal contribution to an institution's operational budget (Steward, 2008). More importantly, the findings of this current study suggest the need for institutions to grow their endowment funds as worthy institutions are likely to offer financial support to their students to persist to completion.

The results also seem to indicate that private and auxiliary services, like other strategies institutions, use to garner additional revenue, have a positive influence on the graduation rate for Black students but a negative influence on the overall graduation rate and those of Hispanic and Native American students. Although the findings of this study differ slightly from those of Hamrick et al. (2004), which focused on the association between the availability of auxiliary services and graduation rates, the present work suggests the need for further examination of the connection between private and auxiliary services revenue and graduation rates by racial group.

The result that revenue from auxiliary services is significantly and positively related to the graduation rate of Black students was unexpected. The literature has shown that most Black students are associated with auxiliary services, which tends to be the largest employer of students on campus (Bundrick & Pruett, 2017). As highlighted by a national survey conducted by the National Association for Campus

Activities in partnership with Riddle and Bloom (Bundrick & Pruett, 2017), auxiliary services are responsible for contributing to students' success (i.e., mentorship, employment, academic retention, and attainment) beyond what is evidenced by the revenue and budget. Their findings suggest that increasing revenue from auxiliary services has a positive relationship with the graduation rates of some students' racial groups.

The results of the fixed effects analysis suggest that except for revenue from state and local funding and auxiliary and private services (in some institutions), other revenue sources relied upon in times of financial difficulty may be negatively associated with graduation rates. The results also show that the magnitude of the relationship between each revenue strategy and graduation rate varied by the type of institution. The higher 2.9% graduation rate increase in master's institutions as compared to 0.9% in doctoral institutions in response to an average increase in state and local appropriation could indicate a difference in state support for research-intensive public universities (AAAS, 2015; SHEEO, 2014; Taylor et al., 2013). As McLendon et al. (2014) noted, the differences in state support for research and non-research universities are likely to have negative effects on both students and the education system, in the long run. Like previous studies, the findings of this study emphasize how much the availability of financial resources matters in improving graduation rates for all students.

Revenue Strategies and Graduation Rate by Institution Type

These results show that depending on revenue from private and auxiliary services may increase graduation rates for doctoral and master's institutions but not for bachelor's institutions. More importantly, the results demonstrate that the return on investment from auxiliary services may depend on the institution's investment level, which could be lower in bachelor's institutions as compared to doctoral and master's institutions. Moreover, not all sources of revenue can help schools achieve their mission. Thus, there is a need for consistent support for universities seeking to attain a 65% postsecondary completion rate.

Like other previous studies, this study has certain limitations, such as using the graduation rate as an outcome. Graduation rate is a function of many predictors, not limited to those included in the current model. Other elements, such as political and institutional policies have been shown to positively correlate with student outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationships among different revenue strategies public institutions rely upon in times of financial difficulty, and how they might influence student outcomes. The results show that five revenue strategies have varying relationships with graduation rates when examined by institution type and student racial group. The findings support the claim that relying on revenue strategies other than state funding could negatively impact the graduation rates of all students. Except for the relationships between research revenue and Native American students'

graduation rate, endowments and Hispanic students' graduation rate, and private and auxiliary services and Black students' graduation rate, all of which were significantly positive, revenue strategies were significantly and negatively associated with graduation rates, though the extent differed by group.

The relationships between revenue strategies and graduation rate by institution type also varied. Except for state and local appropriations and private and auxiliary services (for doctoral and master's institutions), revenue strategies were either significantly and negatively associated or not significantly associated with graduation rates. This suggests the need for consistency in state funding and investment in racial minority students to reduce disparities in degree completion. In addition, helping institutions create reserves for financially difficult times would improve institutional outcomes, including the rates of graduation.

REFERENCES

American Academy of Arts and Sciences. (2016). *Public research universities: Understanding the financial model. American Academy of Arts & Sciences*. https://www.amacad.org/multimedia/pdfs/publications/researchpapersmonographs/PublicResearchUniv_FinancialModel.pdf.

Bailey, T., & Xu, D. (2012). *Input-adjusted graduation rates and college accountability: What is known from twenty years of research*. Context for Success Working Paper. http://www.hcmstrategists.com/contextforsuccess/papers/LIT_REVIEW.pdf

Breusch, T. S., & Pagan, A. R. (1980). The Lagrange multiplier test and its applications to model specification in econometrics. *Review of Economic Studies, 47*, 239–254.

Bundrick, L., & Pruett, A.(2017). NIRSA partners with riddle & Bloom to maximize value on campuses. *National Association for Campus* Activities. https://www.naca.org/Pages/default.aspx

Carnevale, A. P., Jayasundera, T., & Gullish, A. (2016). *America's divided recovery: College haves and have-nots*. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

Chen, G.(2020). State spending impacting graduation rates at community colleges across the Country. *Community College Review*. https://www.communitycollegereview.com/blog/state-spending-impacting-graduation-rates-at-community-colleges-across-the-country

Cheslock, J. J, & Gianneschi, M. (2008). Replacing state appropriations with alternative revenue sources: The case of voluntary support. *The Journal of Higher Education, 79*(2), 208-229.

Crisp, G., Doran, E., & Reyes, N. A. S. (2018). Predicting graduation rates at 4-year broad access institutions using a Bayesian modeling approach. *Research in Higher Education, 59(*2), 133-155.

Delaney, J. A., & Doyle, W. R. (2007). The role of higher education in state budgets. In K. M. Shaw & D. E. Heller (Eds.), *State postsecondary education research: New methods to inform policy and practice* (pp.55-76). Stylus Publishing.

Delaney, J. A., & Doyle, W. R. (2011). State spending on higher education: Testing the balance wheel over time. *Journal of Education Finance, 36*(4), 343–368.

Delaney, J. A., & Doyle, W. R. (2014). State spending on higher education capital outlays. *Research in Higher Education*, *55*(5), 433-466.

Delaney, J. A., & Doyle, W. R. (2018). Patterns and volatility in state funding for higher education, 1951-2006. *Teachers College Record*, *120*(6), 1-42.

Deming, D. J. (2017). Increasing college completion with a federal higher education matching grant. *The Hamilton Project, Policy Proposal 2017-03.* http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/files/increasing_college_completion_with_federal_higher_education_matching_grant_pb.pdf

Deming, D. J., Goldin, C., Katz, L. F., & Yuchtman, N. (2015). Can online learning bend the higher education cost curve? *American Economic Review*, *105*(5), 496-501.

Desrochers, D. M., & Wellman, J. V. (2011). Trends in college spending 1999-2009. Where does the money come from? Where does it go? What does it buy? A Report of the Delta Cost Project. *Delta Project on Postsecondary Education Costs, Productivity and Accountability*.

Dietrich, S. (2015, July 13). *Finding alternative revenue streams to control tuition, expand diversity, and increase enrollment*. http://blogem.ruffalonl.com/finding-alternative-revenue-streams-control-tuition-expand-diversity-increase-enrollment/

Doyle, W. R., & Delaney, J. A. (2009). Higher education funding: The new normal. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, *41*(4), 60-62.

Doyle, W. R., Dziesinski, A. B., & Delaney, J. A. (2018 March, 9). *Modeling volatility in public funding for higher education*. https://aefpweb.org/sites/default/files/webform/ doyle_dziesinski_delaney_volatility_2018.pdf

Ehrenberg, R. G. (2012). American higher education in transition. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 26*(1), 193–216.

Fowles, J.(2014). Funding and focus: Resource dependence in public higher education. *Research in Higher Education*, *55*, 272–287. doi.org/10.1007/s11162-013-9311-x

Gansemer-Topf, A. M., & Schuh, J. H. (2005). Institutional grants: Investing in student retention and graduation. *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, *35*(3), 5-20.

Gansemer-Topf, A. M., & Schuh, J. H. (2006). Institutional selectivity and institutional expenditures: Examining organizational factors that contribute to retention and graduation. *Research in Higher Education*, *47*(6), 613-642.

Gershenfeld, S., Zhan, M., & Hood, D. W. (2019). The impact of a promise: A loan replacement grant, low-income students, and college graduation. *The Review of Higher Education, 42*(3), 1073-1100.

Gordon, G., & Hedlund, A. (2017). Accounting for the rise in college tuition. *Education, skills, and technical change: Implications for future US GDP growth,* 357-394.

Gregerman, S. R., Lerner, J. S., Von Hippel, W., Jonides, J., & Nagda, B. A. (1998). Undergraduate student-faculty research partnerships affect student retention. *The Review of Higher Education*, *22*(1), 55-72.

Hamilton, D., & Darity, W. A. (2017). The political economy of education, financial literacy, and the racial wealth gap. *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Review, 99* (1): 59– 76.

Hanover Research, (2020). Alternative revenue generation strategies. *Hanover Research*. https://insights.hanoverresearch.com/hubfs/Alternative-Revenue-Generation-Strategies.pdf

Hathaway, R. S., Nagda, B. A., & Gregerman, S. R. (2002). The relationship of undergraduate research participation to graduate and professional education pursuit: an empirical study. *Journal of College Student Development*, *43*(5), 614-631.

Hearn, J. C. (2003). *Diversifying campus revenue streams: Opportunities and risks*. American Council on Education. https://ihe.uga.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/Diversifying_Campus_Revenue.pdf

Hearn, J. C. (2006). Alternative revenue sources. In D. Priest & E. P. St. John (Eds.), *Privatization and public universities* (pp. 87–108). Indiana University Press.

Hearn, J. C., & Warshaw, J. B. (2015, April). *The evolving organizational character of the public research university*. Paper presented at the Institutional Design Futures Conference, Scottsdale, AZ.

Heck, R. H., Lam, W. S., & Thomas, S. L. (2014). State political culture, higher education spending indicators, and undergraduate graduation outcomes. *Educational Policy*, *28*(1), 3-39.

Hovey, H. (1999). *State spending for higher education in the next decade: The battle to sustain current levels*. National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education.

Lacy, T. A., Fowles, J., Tandberg, D. A., & Hu, S. (2017). US state higher education appropriations: assessing the relationships between agency politicization, centralization, and volatility. *Policy and Society*, *36*(1), 16-33.

Laderman, S., & Heckert, K. (2021). *SHEF: State Higher Education Finance, FY 2020. State Higher Education Executive Officers*. https://shef.sheeo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/SHEEO_SHEF_FY20_Report.pdf

Long, B, (2016). *State support for higher education: How changing the distribution of funds could improve college completion rates*, National Commission on Financing 21st Century Higher Education white paper no. 9, University of Virginia Miller Center. http://web1.millercenter.org/commissions/higher-ed/Long_No9.pdf.

Lopatto, D. (2004). Survey of undergraduate research experiences (SURE): First findings. *Cell Biology Education*, *3*(4), 270-277.

Lowry, R. C. (2001). The effects of state political interests and campus outputs on public university revenues. *Economics of Education Review*, *20*(2), 105-119.

Lynch, M.(2018, December,19). Colleges seek new revenue streams, as students push back over tuition increases. *The Edvocate*. https://www.theedadvocate.org/colleges-seek-new-revenue-streams-students-push-back-tuition-increases

McLendon, M. K., Tandberg, D. A., & Hillman, N. W. (2014). Financing college opportunity: Factors influencing state spending on student financial aid and campus appropriations, 1990 through 2010. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *655*(1), 143-162.

Millea, M., Wills, R., Elder, A., & Molina, D. (2018). What matters in college student success? Determinants of college retention and graduation rates. *Education, 138*(4), 309-322.

Minh, N. and Van, T. (2022) Spin-off and commercialization of university researches. *Open Journal of Social Sciences, 10*,(1) 256-266. doi: 10.4236/jss.2022.101021.

Mitchell, M., Leachman, M., & Masterson, K. (2017). A lost decade in higher education funding. State cuts have driven up tuition and reduced quality. *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*. https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/a-lost-decade-in-higher-education-funding

Mitchell, M., Leachman, M., & Saenz, M. (2019). State higher education funding cuts have pushed costs to students, worsened inequality. *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*. https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/state-higher-education-funding-cuts-have-pushed-costs-to-students

Morrison, M. C. (2012). Graduation odds and probabilities among baccalaureate colleges and universities. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *14*(2), 157-179.

Morrison, M. C. (2006). *Structural determinants of graduation rates: A causal analysis*. North Iowa Area Community College. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED505275.pdf

Navas, S.(2020). The future of revenue diversification in higher education | Part 1 – why are we investing in this space? *Emerge Edtech Insights.* https://medium.com/emerge-edtech-insights/the-future-of-revenue-diversification-in-higher-education-part-1-why-are-we-investing-in-this-d2a0fca8c8d5

Noll, R. G. (Ed.). (2010). *Challenges to research universities*. Brookings Institution Press.

Page, R., & John, K. (2019). Commercializing academic medical research: the role of the translational designer. *The Design Journal, 22*(5), 687-705. https://doi.org/10.1080/14606925.2019.1629776

Paddick, R. (2017 September, 13). Universities successfully finding new revenue streams. *The Business of Higher Education.* https://universitybusiness.co.uk/–estates/university-revenue-sources/

Pfeffer, J. & Salancik, G.R. (1978). *The external control of organizations. A resource dependence perspective*. Stanford University Press.

Pike, G. R. (2013). NSSE benchmarks and institutional outcomes: A note on the importance of considering the intended uses of a measure in validity studies. *Research in Higher Education*, *54*(2), 149-170.

Pike, G. R., & Robbins, K. R. (2020). Using panel data to identify the effects of institutional characteristics, cohort characteristics, and institutional actions on graduation rates. *Research in Higher Education*, *61*(4), 485-509

Rodenbusch, S. E., Hernandez, P. R., Simmons, S. L., & Dolan, E. L. (2016). Early engagement in course-based research increases graduation rates and completion of science, engineering, and mathematics degrees. *CBE Life Sciences Education*, *15*(2). doi:10.1187/cbe.16-03-0117

Rullman, L., Strong, L., Farley, C., Keegan, K., & White, R. (2008). Top 10 auxiliary services trends for 2008: Campus administrators and consultants offer valuable insights. *College Services, 8*(3), 16-19.

Ryan, J. F. (2004). The relationship between institutional expenditures and degree attainment at baccalaureate colleges. *Research in Higher Education, 45*, 97-114.

Sanford, T., & Hunter, J. M. (2011). Impact of performance funding on retention and graduation rates. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *19*, 1-30.

Scott, M., Bailey, T., & Kienzl, G. (2006). Relative success? Determinants of college graduation rates in public and private colleges in the US. *Research in Higher Education, 47*(3), 249-279.

Slaughter, S., & Rhoades, G. (2004). *Academic capitalism and the new economy*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

State Higher Education Executive Officers. (2017). *SHEF: FY 2016 State higher education finance.* https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED593738.pdf

Tandberg, D. A. (2008). The politics of state higher education funding. *Higher Education in Review*, *5*(1), 1-36.

Tandberg, D. A. (2010). Politics, interest groups, and state funding of public higher education. *Research in Higher Education*, *51*(5), 416-450.

Tandberg, D. A., & Ness, E. C. (2011). State capital expenditures for higher education: Where the real politics happens. *Journal of Education Finance*, 36(4), 394-423.

Taylor, B. J., Cantwell, B., & Slaughter, S. (2013). Quasi-markets in US higher education: The humanities and institutional revenues. *The Journal of Higher Education, 84*(5), 675-707.

The PEW Charitable Trusts. (2019). *Two decades of change in federal and state higher education funding: Recent trends across levels of government*. Author. https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/2019/10/fedstatefundinghigheredu_chartbook_v1.pdf

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college*. University of Chicago Press.

Titus, M. A. (2009). The production of bachelor's degrees and financial aspects of state higher education policy: A dynamic analysis. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *80*(4), 439-468.

Titus, M. A. (2006). No college student left behind: The influence of financial aspects of a state's higher education policy on college completion. *The Review of Higher Education 29*(3), 293-317.

Torres-Reyna, O. (2007). *Panel data analysis fixed and random effects using Stata* (v. 4.2). Data & Statistical Services, Princeton University.

Webb, J. C. (2015). A path to sustainability: How revenue diversification helps colleges and university survive through economic conditions. *Journal of International and Interdisciplinary Business Research, 2*(7), 66-97.

Webber, D. A., & Ehrenberg, R. G. (2010). Do expenditures other than instructional expenditures affect graduation and persistence rates in American higher education? *Economics of Education Review*, *29*(6), 947-958.

Weerts, D. J., & Ronca, J. M. (2006). Examining differences in state support for higher education: A comparative study of state appropriations for research I universities. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *77*(6), 935-967.

Wekullo, C., & Musoba, G. (2020). The relationship between alternative strategies of funding and institutional financial health for public research universities. *Higher Education Politics & Economics*, *6*(1), 81-103. doi: 10.32675/hepe.v6i1.2439

Zhang, L. (2009). Does state funding affect graduation rates at public four-year colleges and universities? *Educational Policy, 23*(5), 714-731.

Zumeta, W. (2004). State higher education financing: Demand imperatives meet structural, cyclical, and political constraints. In E. P. St. John & M. D. Parsons (Eds.), *Public funding of higher education: Changing contexts and new rationales* (pp. 79–107). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Zumeta, W. (2010). The great recession: Implications for higher education. In *NEA 2010 Almanac of Higher Education* (pp. 29-42). National Education Association.

Zumeta, W. (2018). State finances and higher education in Trump year two. *The NEA 2018 Almanac of Higher Education* (pp. 57-70). National Education Association.

CAROLINE WEKULLO, PhD, is a research scientist affiliated with the Directorate of Research at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya. Dr. Wekullo received her doctoral degree in higher education administration leadership and policy from Texas A&M University. Her research centers on policy and financial issues influencing the operation of higher education institutions. Her research also focuses on student access, retention, engagement, and completion/advancement, as well as the measures of faculty performance, global aspects of talent development, and conflict management in higher education institutions. Dr. Wekullo is an editorial board member, copy editor, series editor, and reviewer of several top-tier journals in her field. She has published several peer-reviewed journal articles, 1 book, 7 book chapters, and made over several presentations nationally and internationally. Email: ccs18wekullo@gmail.com.

Peer-Reviewed Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 8, Issue 1 (2022), pp. 32-44
ISSN: 2162-3104 (Print), 2166-3750 (Online)
doi: 10.32674/hepe.v8i1.4571
ojed.org/hepe

Politics and Non/Partisanship: Is College Student Government a Neutral Space?

Michael A. Goodman
University of Texas - Austin

ABSTRACT

College student government is a form of student involvement in higher education, and one that has evolved over time. But student government is not without politics, from legislating on campus to making statements on local, national, and international issues. This article illuminates data from a phenomenological study of nineteen former student government officers who ran for or served in post-college public office (e.g., mayors, city councilmembers, state senators, and more). Two major themes are rendered in this article: *student government and non/partisanship* and *student government and decision-making power*. Questions and recommendations are left as a way to better understand college students and student government and serve as a calling to further interrogate this topic and form of student–and political–engagement.

Keywords: student government, college, partisanship, politics, student affairs, post-college office

---

Is college student government a neutral space? While students do not identify their candidacy alongside a major United States political party (e.g., Democrat, Independent, Republican), there is something about the politics and non/partisanship of college student government that is worth exploring. For example, in an early study that surveyed fifty former student government leaders (including elected, legislative, judiciary, and in class office) 8-11 years after their college graduation, Fendrich (1973) found that former student government leaders frequently followed political events in the media and voted regularly in elections. Further, former student government leaders had a preference toward a "moderate position" political identification (Fendrich, 1973, p. 164). Years later, Templeton et al. (2018) found no

significant differences between student government presidents based on political ideology among other identity factors. Still, there is discourse that higher education is a liberal enterprise (Abrams & Khalid, 2020; Kurtzleben, 2016; Parker, 2019). For example, in one study examining 42 colleges and universities in five different states, Ardoin et al. (2015) found that Democratic candidates received greater electoral support in college precincts and that barriers to college student voting would benefit Republicans mostly. Students' ideological shifts on abortion, affirmative action, and same-sex marriage were issues where a "liberalizing" effect was found in higher education (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2020, p. 663). Thus, the question remains: *Is college student government a neutral space?*

COLLEGE STUDENT GOVERNMENT: POLITICAL, (NON?)PARTISAN, AND… "NEUTRAL?"

At face-value, *yes…*or, at least, some argue *they should be*. In 2016, UCLA Vice Chancellor Jerry Kang wrote in a campus publication about the "importance of being neutral" regarding student government, and suggested, "I'd be very concerned if an elected student government, at a public institution, using mandatory fees, could discriminate on the basis of political viewpoint" (para. 3). Student government at Oakland Community College, as another example, has a section in their constitution about "neutrality," in that student government should be neutral on political and religious matters (Student Government Constitution, n.d., p. 5). Further, organizations like the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) call on student governance groups to legislate in viewpoint-neutral ways (Greenberg, 2021). For example, in 2021, the student government at Wichita State University grappled with granting organization registration to Turning Point USA, a conservative student group; in 2017, the same student government denied recognition to Young Americans for Liberty (Greenberg, 2021). But FIRE reiterated the First Amendment, and posited, "Personal animosity to the group's viewpoints, and the potential offensiveness of the group's ideology, are impermissible bases to deny recognition" (Greenberg, 2021, para. 8).

But it is more complicated than this. Literature on college student government reveals this form of involvement as one that enables high-level decision-making (Goodman, 2021a; May, 2010; Smith et al., 2016; Templeton et al., 2018), and allows individual students to contribute to the welfare of their greater college community (Komives, 2019; Kuh & Lund, 1994). Student government leaders are deeply involved in committee work on campus (Goodman, 2021a), and frequently bear the responsibility of funding various student organizations (Smith et al., 2016). However, while college student governments often support the financial needs of student organizations (Smith et al., 2016), the responsibility can be political and contentious. For example, at the University of Oregon in 2020, student government leaders attempted to cut off funding and remove recognition of the College Republicans (Schow, 2020); similarly at Stanford University in 2022, College Republicans fought back against a decision by the student government to reject a funding request for an event featuring former U.S. Vice President Mike Pence (Viloria & Tati, 2022).

Outside of student government, identity politics are prominent on college campuses more broadly, yet there is limited research on the development of a student's social and political identity (Morgan, 2021). Woessner and Kelly-Woessner (2020) found the same ideological identification between students' first and fourth year of college. However, students who were centrist in their first year were twice as likely to move left rather than right (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2020). The exception to these findings were shifts regarding social and political issues related to abortion, affirmative action, and same-sex marriage, which showed students drift left from their first to fourth year of college (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2020). Consequently, Curtis et al. (2019) found that students displayed *political cynicism* as it related to their disengagement from politics and fear of how their political ideologies would be accepted by peers. Further, the authors suggested that college students experience a "suspended political bubble," wherein they navigated norms around political engagement, which led to obstacles that prompted them to disengage altogether (Curtis et al., 2019, p. 501). Further, recent college graduates had a negative view of politics and often felt constrained or unable to advance their civic identity within their careers (Johnson & Ferguson, 2018).

Still, there are nuances with the individuals who hold leadership positions. For example, in a study on openly gay undergraduate men in elected student government, Goodman (2021b) described participants' experiences through an expectation to be unbiased. One participant recalled the diverse political ideologies in his swing state, and that he was told early on that if candidate Donald Trump came to campus, regardless of disagreeing with his politics, he would be expected to shake his hand like any other political candidate visiting campus (Goodman, 2021b). Despite the shift away from student leadership as solely positional in higher education (e.g., Dugan, 2017), in the present study on former student government officers who recently ran for or served in post-college public office (e.g., mayor, city council, school board, state-wide roles), I found that college student government was a significant form of public service (Goodman, 2022). Within that public service, notions of politics and non-partisanship were mentioned by participants, and make up the present article.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION

To do phenomenology in the way of applied research aligns with Moran's (2000) belief that this methodology is both a "method and a general movement" (p. 3), and a practice rather than a system. Here, *doing* phenomenology allows the researcher to be an "active ingredient" in the research process, interpreting rather than solely observing (Arminio, 2001, p. 241). According to van Manen (1997), the researcher turns to a phenomenon that interests and commits them to the world; in the context of this study, my own consideration for the (or any) connection between college student government and post-college public office. One major contribution of phenomenology is the protection of "the subjective view of experience as a necessary part of any full understanding of the nature of knowledge" (Moran, 2000, p. 21). As

such, implicitness is brought to be explicit through deconstruction, reflection, and recovery (Arminio, 2001).

This study was guided by the phenomenological research question: *What are the lived experiences of former student government officers who recently ran for or served in post-college public office?* This study received Institutional Review Board approval from the University of Maryland, College Park for research involving human subjects, and all participants signed a consent form to declare their commitment to participate. From two conversations with nineteen participants, some who were in partisan roles (e.g., state senators) and some who were not (e.g., school board members), this article extracts data regarding elements of politics and non/partisanship as related to the experiences of former college student government officers. Participants must have been eighteen years of age or older, formerly elected to their collegiate student government (in any elected capacity, from Executive Branch to legislative), and ran for or served in elected public office during 2018-2021 (Table 1). Participant identities are masked through self-selected pseudonyms and limited descriptions (Kaiser, 2009). The larger phenomenological study engaged van Manen's (1997) six research activities for conducting human science research, and themes were brought forward with a hermeneutical consciousness (Gadamer, 1975).

To arrive at a phenomenon and then put into words its understandings and insights is "an enormous challenge" (van Manen, 2017, p. 779). As a result, some scholars enlisting qualitative methods, including phenomenology, may engage with data analysis programs and technologies to assist in the challenging process of generating insights into the structures of lived human experience (van Manen, 2017). To analyze these data, I drew out key themes by examining participant conversation transcripts in a line-by-line manner, and in consideration of van Manen's (1997) thematic analysis (i.e., drawing out themes based on interpretation). In the end, I leaned on van Manen's (2017) rendering(s) of phenomenology to best guide my methodological approach; he stated, "Genuine phenomenological inquiry is challenging and satisfying precisely because its meaningful revelations must be originary and existentially compelling to the soul" (p. 779). Here, there is a consciousness of not relying on my own experiences, and rather, remaining attentive to the phenomenon itself (Willis, 2001).

RELEVANT THEMES AND KEY INSIGHTS

Two themes from the larger phenomenological study are brought forward as related to the politics of college student government: *student government and non/partisanship*, and notions of *student government and decision-making power*.

Student Government and Non/Partisanship

Henry named his city-wide role as "*actually similar*" to student government, in that they are both "*not partisan*." He quoted a sentiment attributed to former Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, that there is not a Democrat or Republican way to "fix a

Table 1: Participants

Pseudonym	Ran or Served	Office Type	Gender	Race/Ethnicity
Amy*	Ran/Served	City-wide	Female	White
Charles	Ran/Served	State-wide	Male	White
Christian*	Ran/Served	County-wide	Man	Latinx
Cici*	Ran/Served	City-wide	Female	Multiracial
Cyndi Shin	Ran/Served	State-wide	Female	Asian
Henry	Ran/Served	City-wide	Male	White
James	Ran/Served	City-wide	Male	White
John Brown*	Ran	City-wide	Male	African American and Latino
Karina*	Ran	City-wide	Female	Black and Latina
Mark*	Ran/Served	City-wide	Male	Black
Michael*	Ran/Served	County-wide	Male	Asian
Nelson*	Ran/Served	City-wide	Male	White
Patrick Mitchell*	Ran	National	Male	White
Paula*	Ran	State-wide	Female	White
Rufus	Ran/Served	County-wide	Male	White
Shirley*	Ran/Served	State-wide	Female	White
Ta-Nehisi Obama*	Ran/Served	City-wide	Male	Black
Theo Kennedy*	Ran/Served	County-wide	Male	Multiracial
Yvonne	Ran/Served	State-wide	Female	White

**Participant served as student body president while in college*

pothole." Similarly, Cici shared that the student government's "*purview was neutral, just like for that matter,* [this city-wide role] *is neutral*." However, there was still tension in student government. Cici posited, "*I'm trying to serve all students. And yet, there was still like, you know, you need to go and you need to advocate to the trustees for this, this, this. And that was, again, the far left, the far right*."

The *far left* and *far right* were known entities. In college, Nelson suggested that students all knew the political "*affiliations*" of people running for student government. He recalled waking up the morning of his election to an endorsement from a local conservative elected leader, as well as endorsements from other "*liberal figures*." For Nelson, this meant his student government work spoke for itself, and he was pleasantly surprised to receive support from someone of a different political affiliation. When Theo got to college, he recalled, "*most of the leadership in our student government were more conservative leaning*," which led his College Democrats to brainstorm ways to get involved in student government. Theo became "*very, very*" involved in College Democrats when he ran for student government president. In Theo's experience, this meant "*the other partisan party wanted to be just as equally engaged in the election for a representative which usually is very non-competitive*." Theo identifies as a moderate Democrat, and one challenge for him in both student government and his elected post-college role was that he viewed his

leadership approach to be very pragmatic. For example, he described his deep concern for procedure(s), and even if he thought something was a good policy, he "*may not necessarily go in favor of it if it didn't follow the right procedural mechanisms*." Mark was also part of his political party while in student government and led those in the opposing political party. "*And so that created a friction, created conflict right there*," he shared, as he viewed himself seeing the world "*totally different*" from peers at the time.

Working *alongside* one another, with parties in tow, was a something most participants were aware of, and in some ways more so than others. For example, when James, a Democrat, was student government vice president, he served under a president who identified as a Republican; both serving at a "*very liberal college*." While partisanship was at play in student government, there were also relationships and friendships being built. Patrick, a lifelong Democrat, recalled that two of his best friends were individuals he met in student government – one a "*super conservative Republican*," and the other a moderate, libertarian. He reflected:

> *It made me realize the importance of listening to each other in on, on a number of things, we weren't far off from each other in terms of what our what our values were, and what we cared about, maybe we've looked at it, how to get there differently, but at least, you know, we could, we could talk about things. And that has stuck with me.*

Patrick further reflected on experiences where he and his peers separated their "*political, liberal, conservative*" identifiers and bonded based on other, additional shared values and passions. Conversely, Karina recalls a time where she was threatened by a "*gun-toting conservative*" while she was student government president, and reflected, "*Are you seriously threatening me over a student government bill, like, hello*." In professional and personal ways, each of these identifiers and knowledge of political identity were salient to these leaders.

Student Government and Decision-Making Power

Awareness of partisanship and politics were present when participants recalled experiences with decision-making. When Charles' state government legislature considered concealed carry on campus, he found student government members who were associated with the Young Republicans supportive of the student government's stance that universities should have control over allowing weapons on campus. He shared, "*It was certainly not as partisan, as you know, the legislature is, but we also prided ourselves, I think on bringing together all the different perspectives before making a decision*." Similarly, Cici processed nuances associated with decision-making in her college student government:

> *Well, Planned Parenthood and abortion is not an issue that you should be voting on as a student. At the same time, that is an issue for some of the students that are on campus, and how do they access the health care they need?*

Similarly, Michael saw issues from his time in student government that could have been perceived as partisan today but did not feel it at the time. Michael identified with an older generation and assumed students and student governments today are fighting "*climate change*" and are "*against gun violence*." From a similar generation as

Michael, Ta-Nehisi saw his student government as political, though would not necessarily frame it as "*progressive and liberal or conservative.*" Some of this emerged in his institution creating ethnic studies departments, and also through labor politics on campus. In one example, Ta-Nehisi shared that statewide politics dominated some of his time as student government president. He recalled a time when student fees and tuition were increasing and felt "*pressure to be engaged politically*." This led Ta-Nehisi to build and develop coalitions with other student government presidents in his state.

While in college, Nelson's student government created a diversity and inclusion position, which initially failed to pass through the representative body. Nelson recalled the dissenting votes as "*white males who have to be fairly conservative*" who made statements that came from Republican talking points. Having been involved in student government for several years, Nelson reflected on the experience and shared, "*We've never really waded into that water, as a student* [government]. *We'd never really gotten there. And it was never my intention to muddy those waters. But it was an issue that was so inherently political*." In this case, Nelson cited decisions related to diversity and inclusion as inherently political, which was also brought forward by other participants. Cyndi recalled religious undertones and pressure at her institution, where leaders carried Bibles, hosted Bible studies, and "*constantly encourage*[ed] *religious activities*." In these examples, identity was also political (e.g., race, religion, and more).

Patrick recalled a major decision made by student government when he was in college, during a "*national conservative movement to push to make college campuses, you know, more 'patriotic."*" Patrick shared with his peers that he would veto one bill in particular, and his peers suggested that he was "*un-American*," so much so that some members of his Cabinet resigned. Many other participants talked about making decisions during specific periods of time, including war, national elections, local disasters, and 9/11. Nearly all mentioned COVID-19, and both Paula and Amy reflected on the change in their most recent campaign strategies, and the politicization of COVID-19 response(s) (as well as the lack thereof in their respective states). The conflation of politics was not always so clearly divided. For example, in addition to the "*two major political parties*" holding many seats in Theo's student government, he also saw Turning Point USA as a presence, and one that "*caused a lot of drama*" on his campus and in his student government. More than the others in the student government space, he saw Turning Point USA as (most) partisan with specific issues and decisions and believed that "*they shouldn't be*."

Finally, Theo and John mentioned Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS). Theo watched similar institutions as his vote on BDS resolutions before, during, and after his time in student government. He stated, "*There are Dems and Republicans that are super pro-Israel, but this BDS thing is something that goes beyond just your typical partisan line, but it is something that is so divisive*." While considering the politics of this topic, and his own feelings/beliefs, Theo vowed to not have a resolution addressing BDS or divestment from Israel. He shared, "*Because first of all, we are a student government, we shouldn't be getting involved in international politics. Like it's not our job*." While he could not control what legislation was written by representatives, he worked "*very hard*" to "*make sure it wouldn't even be considered*

up for debate." Similarly, John saw the Israel-Palestine conflict and the BDS movement on campus as one that read, "*You're either with us or against us*." He commented on "*how quick people are to draw lines in the sand*," and suggested that partisanship regarding these types of decisions has only intensified on campuses.

DISCUSSION

It is worth returning to the initial question at hand: *Is college student government a neutral space?* Well, *it's complicated*, may be a more reasonable answer. Instead, some questions may help guide the path forward for students, administrators, and stakeholders as they grapple with the politics and non/partisanship of this form of student involvement. Specifically, what does it even mean *to be* neutral in student government? What issues are neutral? And is *non*partisanship even a possibility in today's political climate? This is a continued issue taken up by those associated with college student government, and as college and university leaders (including student leaders) determine the role partisan groups play in student government. To determine such a *role*, per se, is not to *limit* one's voice or presence, and instead, may aid in better understanding how, and with which ideologies, students show up. Can one hold both identities and do each space justice? The power and pressure(s) present in both student government and partisan spaces is worthy of continued exploration. What power do each have on campus? And how is that power perceived by campus leaders and stakeholders (including those elected to public office outside of the institutional context)?

While parts of this may be external in some instances (e.g., due to campus-specific decisions), for others it might appear as personal beliefs and/or salient identities—much like the political and identity development of college students illuminated by Curtis et al. (2019), Johnson and Ferguson (2018), and Woessner and Kelly-Woessner (2020). For example, at the University of Florida in 2019, student government senators initiated impeachment proceedings of the student government president, Michael Murphy, who invited Donald Trump, Jr. and Kimberly Guilfoyle to speak on campus (Langlois, 2019). Specifically, students questioned Murphy's "conflicts of interest and fiscal responsibility" of $50,000 in mandatory student fees (Langlois, 2019, para. 11). Several conservative politicians spoke out on Twitter, including a U.S Senator from Florida, Rick Scott (Langlois, 2019). The relationship of students' political identity and belief to their elected position(s) is one that may be at odds with the very peers they work alongside in student government. Some of this might even be the political identity one brings with them into college, and informed by family, pre-college experiences, and more (Morgan, 2021).

So, can students hold both political identities and beliefs, *and* represent their peers in elected student government positions? There is potential value in having a diverse range of candidates on a ticket; perhaps this is the path toward neutrality, that it becomes more about political balance. For example, in one platform campaign at Louisiana State University (LSU) in 2021, the president candidate, Mia LeJeune, shared, "There are republicans, democrats and independents on our ticket…The governor is a democrat, and if I have a connection there, I'm going to use it for the

betterment of the LSU community" (Savoie, 2021, para. 32). It is one thing to have Republicans, Democrats, and Independents as LeJeune suggested; and it is another to engage with groups outside of these *traditional* partisan identities. What about representation from Turning Point USA, Run Gen Z, or Campus Socialists? Do these (types of) groups change the *balance* that LeJeune, and others, seek to engage in their cabinet? What is political about the latter groups that changes the representation and voice as it relates to college student government? Further, such as in the case of Nelson being endorsed by a local leader, what does it mean for external leaders to get involved in college student government elections (e.g., see Rick Perry weighing in on Texas A&M's student government election of Bobby Brooks [Perry, 2017])? Might the very involvement of those outside of higher education be signaling the investment, relevance, and even utility of these roles, and their impact? If not inherently or explicitly partisan, perhaps, these roles imply such value to outside stakeholders and/or community members.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Both non/partisanship and decision-making in college student government have valuable implications as it relates to both practice and research. As participants described knowing about and being affiliated with political parties, such an engagement can and should be considered by college administrators and student government advisors. For example, student government advisors can engage students in leadership training and development that allows them to think critically about neutrality, non/partisanship, and *representation*, and with case studies that may be useful in exploring any/these personal and professional conflicts. Drawing from current examples of this tension may help illuminate the potential challenge faced by student government officers (e.g., Michael Murphy at the University of Florida, or Wichita State University and Turning Point USA registration status). This includes engaging students in reflective exercises to explore their personal/political evolution (e.g., Morgan [2021] found that students' salient social identities were "necessary guide rails to their acquisition of political fluency" [p. 18]). Administrators and advisors can attend to the exploration of students' social identities as reflected in or in conflict with current political discourse (e.g., students passing legislation and resolutions regarding Chik-fil-A's removal from campus, calling on universities to sever ties with city police, unionizing for graduate students, and more [Goodman et al., 2021]). Leadership training in this way might also be executed in retreat-style experiential learning (Egan et al., 2021; Eich, 2008), where students can learn alongside one another, and at the same time, develop relationships with each other outside of professional boundaries.

Finally, participants reflected on their experiences with being in or running for in-college and post-college public office during major and significant periods of time (e.g., 9/11, elections of Barack Obama and Donald Trump, COVID-19). In his leadership development, Michael was inspired by the 2000 U.S. election, and at that time "*saw the fragility of government*." He felt both concerned and inspired to "*roll up my sleeves and get involved*." Future research on college student government may

include the experiences of students leading during significant periods of time, or local/national and political moments and/or crises (and examined through the lens of partisanship as related to such periods of time). For some students this might mean leading in natural disasters (e.g., student government officers at institutions in New Orleans, Louisiana during Hurricane Katrina, or student government officers at the University of Alabama during the 2011 tornadoes in Tuscaloosa, Alabama), and other local or attention-garnering incidents (e.g., the shooting at Virginia Tech in 2007, or the Pennsylvania State University Jerry Sandusky abuse scandal). Further, to better understand how societal issues are being mirrored in student government is worthy of exploration. For example, in what ways might students enact similar practices as those happening in society (e.g., U.S. Congress and impeachment proceedings), milestones and notable elections (e.g., first Muslim U.S. Congresswoman), or even third-party influencers (e.g., Turning Point USA, political action committees)? These research endeavors may further reveal elements about college students, student government, and leadership development more broadly.

CONCLUSION

Elections in the United States are politicized and highly partisan (Warshaw, 2019), and it is reasonable to presume such politics and partisanship to exist in college student government. But is it *neutral*? Can it even be neutral? Is it even supposed to be neutral? Ta-Nehisi shared that over time he saw many peers "*make that same transition*" from student government to post-college public office, and many in very partisan roles (e.g., working on campaigns, working for a party directly). "*These are people who have been debating about this and about that, on campus, they're not going to stop debating. They're going to find another place to go continue contributing to public discourse*," he shared. It is these sentiments that best capture this connection between participants' experiences in college as tied to post-college public office. Perhaps, then, this very question of politics, non/partisanship, *and* neutrality is itself a contribution to public discourse – that pending the institution, the issues, and the students themselves, neutrality is not necessarily called upon as a 'gold standard' of student government; instead, neutrality is a helpful middle space amid the, still necessary, Republicans and Democrats, Independents, and even the Turning Point USA candidates.

REFERENCES

Abrams, S. J., & Khalid, A. (2020, October, 21). Are colleges and universities too liberal? What the research says about the political composition of campuses and campus climate. *AEI*. https://www.aei.org/articles/are-colleges-and-universities-too-liberal-what-the-research-says-about-the-political-composition-of-campuses-and-campus-climate/

Ardoin, P. J., Bell, C. S., & Ragozzino, M. M. (2015). The partisan battle over college student voting: An analysis of student voting behavior in federal, state, and local elections. *Social Science Quarterly, 96*(5), 1178-1195. Doi: 10.1111/ssqu.12167

Arminio, J. L. (2001). Exploring the nature of race-related guilt. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling, 29*, 239-252.

Curtis, S. M. S., Bacha, G. M., & Morgan, D. L. (2019). Cynicism or apathy?: Defining political norms influencing the campus climate. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 56*(5), 492-505. doi: 10.1080/19496591.2019.1648276

Dugan, J. P. (2017). *Leadership theory: Cultivating critical perspectives.* Jossey-Bass.

Egan, J. D., McBrayer, J. S., Wells, P., & Tolman, S. (2021). Exploring undergraduate leadership program attributes from the alumni lens. *College Student Affairs Journal, 39*(1), 73-87. https://doi.org/10.1353/csj.2021.0005

Eich, D. (2008). A grounded theory of high-quality leadership programs. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 15*(2), 176-187.

Fendrich, J. M. (1973). Radicals revisited: Long range effects of student protest. *Journal of Voluntary Action Research, 2*(3), 161-168.

Gadamer, H-G. (1975). *Truth and method.* Continuum.

Goodman, M. A. (2021a). Presidents as practitioners: The lived experience(s) of former student body presidents working in higher education, student affairs. *Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship*, *3*(1), 34-45. https://doi.org/10.52499/2021013

Goodman, M. A. (2021b). Re(-)presentation and advocacy: Openly gay men and the work of elected, undergraduate student government. *Journal of College Student Development*, *62*(6), 692-707. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/850737

Goodman, M. A. (2022). Former student government officers navigating multiple/minoritized identities in collegiate and post-college public office. *Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship, 4*(1), 22-32. https://doi.org/10.52499/2022003

Goodman, M. A., Arndt, A., & Parks, B. (2021). Leadership is political: Social justice and college student government. In C-M. Reneau & M. A. Villarreal (Eds.), *Handbook of research on leading higher education transformation with social justice, equity, and inclusion* (pp. 141-155). IGI Global. doi: 10.4018/978-1-7998-7152-1.ch010

Greenberg, Z. (2021). Wichita State University's student senate is asking whether it can deny a Turning Point USA chapter recognition. Here's why it can't. *FIRE*. https://www.thefire.org/wichita-state-universitys-student-senate-is-asking-whether-it-can-deny-a-turning-point-usa-chapter-recognition-heres-why-it-cant/

Johnson, M. R., & Ferguson Jr., M. (2018). The role of political engagement in college students' civic identity: Longitudinal findings from recent graduates. *Journal of College Student Development, 59*(5), 511-527. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2018.0050

Kaiser, K. (2009). Protecting respondent confidentiality in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research, 19*(11), 1632-1641. doi: 10.1177/1049732309350879

Kang, J. (2016, July 19). UCLA: Equity, diversity & inclusion. Viewpoint neutrality. https://equity.ucla.edu/crosscheck/viewpoint-neutrality/

Komives, S. R. (2019). Engagement with campus activities matters: Toward a new era of educationally purposeful activities. *Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship, 1*(1), 14-25.

Kuh, G. D., & Lund, J. P. (1994). What students gain from participating in student government. In M.C. Terrell & M. J. Cuyjet (Eds.), *New Directors for Student Services: No. 66. Developing student government leadership* (pp. 5-17). Jossey-Bass.

Kurtzleben, D. (2016, April 30). Why are highly educated Americans getting more liberal? *NPR*. https://www.npr.org/2016/04/30/475794063/why-are-highly-educated-americans-getting-more-liberal

Langlois, S. (2019, November 21). University of Florida student explains impeachment of student-body president after Donald Trump Jr.'s $50,000 visit. *MarketWatch*. https://www.marketwatch.com/story/university-of-florida-student-explains-impeachment-of-school-president-after-donald-trump-jrs-50000-visit-2019-11-21

May, W. P. (2010). The history of student governance in higher education. *The College Student Affairs Journal, 28*(2), 207-220.

Moran, D. (2000). *Introduction to phenomenology*. Routledge.

Morgan, D. L. (2021). Nuancing political identity formation in higher education: A phenomenological examination of precollege socialization, identity, and context. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 14*(1), 12-24. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000153

Parker, K. (2019, August 19). The growing partisan divide in views of higher education. *Pew Research Center*. https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/08/19/the-growing-partisan-divide-in-views-of-higher-education-2/

Perry, R. (2017, March 23). Perry: Did A&M shun due process in the name of 'diversity'? *Houston Chronicle*. https://www.houstonchronicle.com/opinion/outlook/article/Perry-Did-A-M-shun-due-process-in-the-name-of-11021097.php

Savoie, C. (2021, March 24). Three LSU SG campaigns face off in 2021 SG debate, discuss Greek life, campus changes. *Reveille*. https://www.lsureveille.com/news/three-lsu-sg-campaigns-face-off-in-2021-sg-debate-discuss-greek-life-campus-changes/article_3a64d5ca-8c60-11eb-aa2b-f7906f381ba5.html

Schow, A. (2020, December 17). University of Oregon student government trying to eject college Republicans. *The Daily Wire.* https://www.dailywire.com/news/university-of-oregon-student-government-trying-to-eject-college-republicans

Smith, E. A., Miller, M. T., & Nadler, D. P. (2016). Does it matter? What college student governments talk about. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 16*(2), 46-53.

Student Government Constitution. (n.d.). Oakland Community College. https://www.oaklandcc.edu/studentlife/studentgovernment/docs/SGConstitution.pdf

Templeton, L., Smith, A., & MacCracken, A. (2018). *Student voice index*. NCLC: National Campus Leadership Council. Washington, D.C.

van Manen, M. (2017). But is it phenomenology? *Qualitative Health Research, 27*(6), 775-779.

van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy* (2nd ed.). The Althouse Press.

Viloria, A. J., & Tati, R. (2022, January 12). Stanford college Republicans file case against Senate on Pence event funding rejection. *The Stanford Daily.* https://stanforddaily.com/2022/01/12/stanford-college-republicans-file-case-against-senate-on-pence-event-funding-rejection/

Warshaw, C. (2019). Local elections and representation in the United States. *Annual Review of Political Science, 22*, 461-479. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-050317-071108

Willis, P. (2001). The "things themselves" in phenomenology. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology, 1*(1), 1-12.

Woessner, M., & Kelly-Woessner, A. (2020). Why college students drift left: The stability of political identity and relative malleability of issue positions among college students. *Political Science & Politics, October*, 657-664. doi:10.1017/S1049096520000396

Michael A. Goodman, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Practice at the University of Texas at Austin, and also serves as a Co-Coordinator of the Program in Higher Education Leadership. Goodman's research focuses on college student involvement, and in particular, student government, student body presidents, and sorority/fraternity life. Goodman is a past undergraduate student government president and graduate student government president, and currently resides in Austin, TX.

Email: michael.goodman@austin.utexas.edu

Opinion Piece

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 8, Issue 1 (2022), pp. 37-
ISSN: 2162-3104 (Print), 2166-3750 (Online)
doi: 10.32674/hepe.v8i1.4497
ojed.org/hepe

The State of Post-Secondary Attainment in Iowa

Matt Romkey
Mercy College of Health Sciences

ABSTRACT

By 2025, 70% of Iowa's jobs will require education or training beyond high school. Despite significant attention and commitment of taxpayers' dollars, the latest reports suggest these efforts will result in a significant shortcoming of qualified workers in the workforce. Post-secondary attainment in Iowa has a disparate impact on non-White students, a disparity that has been compounded by COVID-19. This gap between employer needs and workforce talent could put Iowa at a disadvantage to compete in a new global knowledge economy.

Keywords: higher education, Iowa, post-secondary attainment, workforce development

In 2015, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (Georgetown Center), in collaboration with the Office of the Governor of Iowa, published *Iowa: Education and Workforce Trends through 2025* (Carnevale et al., 2015). This pivotal publication built upon workforce growth anticipated in Iowa's 12 distinct industry clusters identified in *Iowa's Re-Envisioned Economic Development Roadmap* (Battelle Technology Partnership Practice, 2014). The Georgetown Center report, which was commissioned specifically for the state, was designed to ensure Iowa's "long-term education goals and workforce development needs align with the state's economic development goals" and was designed to "inform postsecondary institutions and K-12 schools of the enrollment, completion, and graduation objectives necessary to fill potential job positions" (Carnevale et al., 2015, p. 8).

The outcome of the analysis by the Georgetown Center found that 68% of jobs in Iowa will require education and training beyond high school, three percentage points above the national average of 65% (Carnevale et al., 2015). For comparison,

in 1973, only 28% of U.S. jobs required education beyond a high school diploma (Future Ready Iowa, 2016). In 2016, the Lumina Foundation published *A Stronger Nation, Policy Brief* that was designed to implore policy leaders to respond urgently to the education attainment gap of our nation. At that time, 26 states had responded by setting "attainment goals that meet Lumina's criteria for and efficacy (i.e., the goal is quantifiable, challenging, long term, addresses gaps, and is in statute and/or a strategic plan)" (Lumina Foundation, 2016, p. 1). However, despite the reports finding that Iowa's overall postsecondary attainment rate was 47.3% compared to the 68% determined to be needed by 2025, Iowa had not set a goal that met Lumina's criteria.

In 2016, Iowa Governor Terry Branstad signed Executive Order 88 creating the Future Ready Iowa Alliance, designed to develop a plan to meet Iowa's goal of having 70% of the workforce obtain education or training beyond high school by the year 2025. The Future Ready Iowa initiative developed out of a 2014 National Governors Association grant to "develop strategies to improve the education and training attainment" (Future Ready Iowa, 2016, p. 1). The Alliance's strategic plan was presented in October of 2017 and outlined plans to increase postsecondary attainment. Acknowledging that more than two out of three jobs in Iowa are anticipated to require at least some postsecondary education or training by 2025, the Alliance was prepared to "highlight best practices, nurture high-quality partnerships, and ensure hardworking taxpayer dollars were focused on areas that will maximize progress towards the goal" (Future Ready Iowa, 2016, p. 1).

The Alliance outlined benchmarks including targets to reduce the socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial achievement gaps, and completion rates by traditional-age students and adult learners. These targets were designed to align post-secondary degrees, certificates, and other credentials with high-demand jobs. Mirroring other national trends, Iowans with higher post-secondary attainment earn significantly more than those without. Iowans with a high school diploma earned an average $35,000 annual income between 2013 and 2015. The average jumps to $42,000 for an associate degree and increases to $60,015 for a bachelor's degree (Future Ready Iowa, 2017).

The 2017 *Future Ready Iowa Talent Scorecard* revealed progress was being made between the Lumina Foundation's report and the presentation of the Alliance's strategic plan. In 2016, 58.1% of Iowa's had postsecondary attainment, up from 47.3% in 2014 (Future Ready Iowa, 2017). While this short-term progress is significant, it is worth noting that two different statistical methods were used to calculate the current attainment percentage. The Lumina Foundation (2016) identified an "estimated percentage of state residents who have earned high-value postsecondary certificates… derived from census and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System and by labor market experts at Georgetown Center" (p. 1).

In 2016, the Alliance elected to use the Laborshed Survey to determine educational and training attainment levels. "The 2016 estimate of the number of Iowans age 25 to 64 in the labor force with education beyond high school is calculated by multiplying the estimated percentage of those 25 to 64 years of age who completed education or training beyond high school based on the 2016 Laborshed Survey (58.1%) and an estimate of the total number of Iowans ages 25 to 64 in the labor force

(1,303,979) based on the 2015 American Community Survey" (Future Ready Iowa, 2017, p. 34). This is the first time these data have been used and they should be considered as a baseline to measure future postsecondary attainment change.

These data points highlight the significant remaining gap of 127,700 Iowans who will need to earn postsecondary degrees or credentials to meet the 70% target by 2025. Those individuals are divided into three categories: 41,200 additional traditional-age students who earn degrees or credentials, 35,200 additional degrees or credentials earned by returning adult students who did not complete a degree or credential, and 51,3000 additional degrees or other credentials earned by adults between the ages of 25 and 64 with no recognized post-secondary education (Future Ready Iowa, 2017). These categories should provide a roadmap for developing post-secondary education offerings targeted to meet these individual learner's unique characteristics and needs.

In 2019, a less comprehensive *Metrics that Matter Future Ready Iowa* report utilizing the Laborshed baseline was published containing a somber assessment on the current progress of the state's trajectory towards achieving their goal (Iowa Workforce Development, 2019a). "If Iowans earn postsecondary credentials at current rates, only 60.7% will fall into this category by 2025" (Future Ready Iowa, 2019a, p. 2). As a result of this significant projected shortcoming, on June 3, 2019, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds signed into law H.F. 758, H.F. 546, and S.F. 608, which, combined, established $16 million in funding for the Future Ready Iowa Act.

Thirteen million dollars were utilized to establish the Last-Dollar Scholarship Program. This scholarship was deployed to cover the cost of tuition not covered by other federal and state grants or scholarships for eligible Iowa residents seeking post-secondary credentials in high-demand, well-paying jobs that require up to a two-year degree. One million dollars were reserved to establish the Future Ready Iowa Grant program which is designed to support Iowans who left college after earning at least half the credits toward a four-year degree in a high-demand field, and who return to complete their degree with a minimum of $1,000 for tuition support (Office of the Governor of Iowa, 2019a).

Finally, $1.2 million was used to establish the Future Ready Iowa Employer Innovation Fund, which is a grant opportunity for employers and other partners to collaborate and carry out innovative, creative initiatives to address local workforce issues (Office of the Governor of Iowa, 2019a). In the fall of 2019, more than 5,800 Iowa students received funding through the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship, awarding more than half of the $13 million appropriated by the Iowa Legislature in just its first semester available (Office of the Governor of Iowa, 2019b). This increased commitment by the Iowa Legislature to the Future Ready Iowa goals resulted in an increase in Iowa's postsecondary educational attainment from 57.6% in 2018 to 60.2% in 2019 (Iowa Workforce Development, 2019b).

While these initiatives show promising progress, nobody was prepared for the fallout on college enrollment from the Coronavirus pandemic and how dramatically it would setback state and national postsecondary education attainment targets. Nationally, first-time freshman enrollment is down 13% and enrollment for adult learners aged 30 or older declined at twice the rate of their traditional age counterparts (23.9% versus 12%), and significant declines occurred in enrollment from minority populations, Native American (29.3%), Black (28.4%), and Hispanic students

(27.5%) (National Student Clearinghouse, 2020). In the fall of 2020, the Midwest's undergraduate enrollment was the hardest hit in the country where total enrollment is down 5.7% (Sedmak, 2020). Iowa alone suffered a decrease of 7.1% of total undergraduates compared to the fall of 2019 (National Student Clearinghouse, 2020). These enrollment declines may never be combatted without significant state and national policies putting not only Iowa's Future Ready Iowa targets in jeopardy, but our entire country at risk of being outpaced in response to the future of a global knowledge economy.

REFERENCES

Appropriations Act. S.F. 608. (2019). https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/LGR/88/SF608.pdf

Battelle Technology Partnership Practice. (2014). *Iowa re-envisioned economic development roadmap.* https://www.iowaeda.com/userdocs/documents/ieda/2014BattelleReport.pdf

Carnevale, A., Smith, N., Gulish, A., & Hanson, H. (2015). *Iowa: Education and workforce trends through 2025*. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/iowa-workfrce-2025.pdf

Future Ready Iowa. (2016). *Future ready Iowa fact sheet*. https://governor.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/FutureReadyIowa-FactSheet.pdf

Future Ready Iowa. (2017). *Metrics that matter.* https://www.futurereadyiowa.gov/sites/fri/files/basic_page_files/Future%20Ready%20Iowa%20Metrics%20that%20Matter_0.pdf

Future Ready Iowa. (2019). *Metrics that matter.* https://www.futurereadyiowa.gov/sites/fri/files/basic_page_files/Metrics%20That%20Matter_2019%20FINAL%20042519.pdf

House File. H.F. 758. (2019). https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=HF758

Iowa Workforce Development. (2019a) *State of Iowa laborshed analysis: A study of workforce characteristics.* https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/sites/search.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/files/documents/2018/statewidelaborshed_fullreport_2018.pdf

Iowa Workforce Development. (2019b) *Statewide laborshed survey: Educational attainment data* https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/sites/search.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/files/newsfiles/Educational%20Attainment%2025-64%20Year-Olds%20--%20Statewide%20Laborshed%202010-2019.pdf

Lumina Foundation. (2016) *A stronger nation*. https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/publications/stronger_nation/2016/iowa-brief-2016.pdf

Lumina Foundation. (2017). *Lumina Foundation strategic plan for 2017-2020*. https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/strategic-plan-2017-to-2020-apr17.pdf

National Student Clearinghouse. (2020) *Fall 2020 enrollment (as of Oct. 22).* https://nscresearchcenter.org/stay-informed/

Office of the Governor of Iowa. (2019a, June 3). *Gov. Reynolds announces Future Ready Iowa funding* [Press release]. https://governor.iowa.gov/2019/06/gov-reynolds-announces-future-ready-iowa-funding

Office of the Governor of Iowa. (2019b, November 19). *Governor Reynolds Announces Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship Awards for Fall 2019* [Press release]. https://www.futurereadyiowa.gov/governor-reynolds-announces-future-ready-iowa-last-dollar-scholarship-awards-fall-2019

School Funding Act. H.F. 546 (2019). https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/LGR/88/attachments/HF546.html

Sedmak, T. (2020). *Fall 2020 undergraduate enrollment down 4.4%; graduate enrollment up 2.9$.* https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/blog/fall-2020-undergraduate-enrollment-down-4-4-graduate-enrollment-up-2-9/

Matt Romkey, serves as the Executive Vice President and Chancellor at a health science college in Iowa. He is currently earning his doctorate in leadership and innovation at Arizona State University. His research centers around deploying alternative learning pathways for adult learners and increasing access to education. Email: matt.romkey@gmail.com

Opinion Piece

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 8, Issue 1 (2022), pp. 50-52
ISSN: 2162-3104 (Print), 2166-3750 (Online)
doi: 10.32674/hepe.v8i1.4327
ojed.org/hepe

Non-Traditional Assessment Tracks for Obtaining Academic Ranks at Universities in Thailand

Gamon Savatsomboon
Mahasarakham University, Thailand

Wouldn't it be great if academics could obtain their academic ranks without (assessors) readers' assessment? If yes, Thai universities and academics must take an advantage of this golden opportunity. This opinion piece focuses on the two non-traditional tracks for obtaining academic ranks stipulated by the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) of Thailand for the first time in history. The criteria were introduced in the Gazette of OHEC in 2020 and will be fully effective on June 23, 2022. The two non-traditional tracks require no assessment from readers to obtain academic ranks for associate and full professorships. These non-traditional tracks are designed only for associate and full professorships in several fields, for example, business and economics. According to the Chairperson of the Policy Driving and Monitoring Working Group, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation (Thai Post, 2021), the reasons driving this change are due to the outdated guidelines and an attempt to make the entry of academic rank internationally recognized and improve Thai universities' recognition on the world stage.

To obtain an associate professor rank through the non-traditional track, an applicant must already be an assistant professor (in business and economics disciplines, for example). In addition, five published academic papers indexed in Scopus are required; however, the applicant must be the principal investigator (PI) or corresponding author (CA) on only three of them. Furthermore, there is a requirement of 150 lifetime citations (excluding self-citations) by journals indexed in Scopus and the life-time H-index must be at least 4 and must be published in Scopus journals only. Finally, the applicant must be head of at least five projects that are receiving/have received funding from external sources. If the applicant has legitimate credentials, academic rank will automatically be granted (no human assessment required). To obtain the rank of full professor, ten published papers indexed in Scopus are required, and the applicant must be PI or CA on all of them. In addition, the

lifetime citations by Scopus-indexed journals must be higher or equal to, for example, 500 for the business discipline and 200 for the economics discipline (excluding self-citations) and the life-time H-index (based on publications in Scopus journals only) must be at least 8. Last, the applicant must be head of at least 10 projects that are receiving/have received funding from external sources. Similar to the previous appointment, if the applicant has legitimate credentials, academic rank will automatically be granted (no human assessment required). Four traditional tracks for associate and full professors are available, two for each, but they are not covered in this piece because they are not of interest at present. In short, I support the two non-traditional tracks described in this section for two reasons:

(1) Introducing internationally recognized criteria into the Gazette of OHEC for obtaining academic rank is appropriate. In my opinion, these non-traditional tracks are golden opportunities for people to advance in their careers. In addition, I believe that the criteria set by OHEC could be achieved by competent academics. In summary, this process can be viewed as professional growth and development at the faculty (individual) level.

(2) At the institutional level, if researchers could achieve academic ranks through the non-traditional tracks, it basically indicates that they would have internationally accepted research outputs. In turn, these research outputs could be used to boost their universities' ranks that are rated by the university ranking institutions, such as the QS Ranking. Six QS Ranking criteria, namely, academic reputation (40%), citations per faculty (20%), employer reputation (10%), faculty/student ratio (20%), international faculty ratio (5%), and international student ratio (5%) exist (Staff Writer, 2021). Please note that the first two categories are combined into 60%. Thai universities could gain marks for the first two categories based on their teaching and research reputations, which are linked to the non-traditional tracks described in this paper.

Non-traditional tracks are not without criticism. According to Sindecharak (2020), there is concern about the new non-traditional tracks through Isara, a national (online) newspaper although overall, he agrees with the non-traditional tracks (not assessed by readers). On the other hand, he thinks that the criteria are too stringent and not achievable. Specifically, he states that the required numbers of publications, citations (both must be based on Scopus journals only), and research projects, and level of H-index (based on publications in Scopus journals only), for example, are too high and that these numbers need to be reduced. He also states that the non-traditional tracks should be extended for the academic rank for assistant professors. His latter remark, however, is also a positive one. As a reminder, other traditional tracks that Thai academics could follow to achieve higher academic ranks can be found.

In summary, I think the new non-traditional tracks stipulated in the OHEC's Gazette are very appropriate because these tracks open opportunities for competent academics to obtain their academic ranks without assessment by readers (human bias also avoided); again, this process provides a golden opportunity. Universities could gain higher reputation from academic successors of these non-traditional tracks, which could lead to higher ranking (at least against their domestic rivals). In addition, these tracks are signs that indicate that Thailand is beginning to push harder to make

Thai academics gain higher competency at a level recognized by the worldwide academic community. Thus, the time is right for OHEC to introduce these non-traditional tracks described in this paper. All in all, Thai academics must strive to obtain their academic ranks through this golden opportunity to further their international reputations. Likewise, Thai universities must align their ecosystems to take the advantage of the golden opportunity.

REFERENCES

Sindecharak, T. (2020, June 24). ชำแหละหลักเกณฑ์แต่งตั้ง ผศ.-รศ.-ศ.ฉบับใหม่พัฒน [illegible] [Dissecting the criteria for appointment Assoc. Prof.-Assoc. Prof.-Prof. New edition develops or destroys academic quality?]. https://www.isranews.org/article/isranews-article/89858-theera.html

Staff Writer. (2021, October 25). QS World University Rankings – methodology. Top Universities. https://www.topuniversities.com/qs-world-university-rankings/methodology

Thai Post. (2021, June 24). อว.แจงเกณฑ์ใหม่ขึ้นสู่ตำแหน่งวิชาการ ของอาจารย์มหาวิทยาลัย มีความเป็นสากลมากขึ้น [The instructor explains the new criteria for an academic position of university professors is more international]. https://www.thaipost.net/main/detail/69610

GAMON SAVATSOMBOON, DBA, is a faculty member in the Department of Management at Mahasarakham University, Thailand. He teaches courses in research and management both at undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition, he provides research-software training courses at basic and advanced levels. Email: gamon.s@acc.msu.ac.th