EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP CONSIDERATION OF MARKET FORCES:

A CASE STUDY OF

STRATEGIC PLANNING DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This case study explored the consideration, inclusion, and significance of market forces in the development of strategic planning at higher education institutions. The design examined methods, procedures, behaviors, and attitudes that Presidents in higher education applied to designing strategic planning processes. Guiding this examination was the Five Forces Model by Michael Porter (1980), a business model that uses market forces to measure success. The results supported the notion that students act as consumers. This concept was a driving force in the development of strategic planning and points to the external lens necessary for strategic planning. Additionally, the results suggested that the key role of the President in forging both the completion and execution of strategic plans. This highlighted a connection between the external view necessary for successful planning with the internal characteristics of the President's role. This dynamic suggested that the President acted as both an originator of market force awareness and as the campaigner for infusing market forces into the strategic planning process. Executive leadership needs to center on the notion that higher education institutions operate in a consumer driven market. This may render traditional processes of strategic planning obsolete, considering the challenges facing the industry. This case study may be vital for understanding how higher education leaders engage in contemporary strategic planning that promotes viability amid the ongoing concerns inherent in a hypercompetitive environment. Future consideration of a contemporary framework based on Porter's model (1980) may assist to create strategic plans driven by market forces for institutions with insufficient institutional planning.

Keywords: higher education institutions, market forces, strategic planning, Five Forces, Porter

Dedication

Over the last three years there has been trepidation and exhilaration that has cycled as often as the sun rises and sets. I want to thank my dissertation chair, committee members, and members of the cohort for the support, mostly in the moments when I required a confidence boost. Additionally, the encouragement provided to me by Fairleigh Dickinson University colleagues has been remarkable and I am humbled to be extended such grace. Without this professional support, I would not have been successful in managing the confluence of pressures to meet critical and juxtaposed deadlines. With the most gratitude, I thank my family for their backing and patience for participating with me in this journey. I am immensely appreciative for their willingness to take on a multitude of responsibilities while I dedicated considerable time to this personal and professional endeavor. I will forever be indebted for the sacrifice and patience made by my wife, Kara, and my children: Kenny and Ryan.

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP CONSIDERATION OF MARKET FORCES:

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Academicians have debated the use of strategic planning in higher education for over 40 years. Keller (1983) wrote about the critical importance of strategic planning and many of his insights remain relevant today. Clark (1998) highlighted that higher education institutions have been successful in their usage of strategic planning. Birnbaum (2000) emphasized that colleges and universities were employing the use of strategic planning as early as the 1970s and this prominence has risen since that time. While many of Keller's (1983) insights remain noteworthy today, there has been a stall in the completely validating the use of strategy in the higher education sector. Limitations of Keller's approach may be part of the reasoning for the lack of full adoption (Temple, 2018). The current state of the higher education sector may now accelerate the need for the acceptance of strategic planning. The global spread of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) was a crisis for every industry, including higher education, and the aftermath of the pandemic continues to present challenges for individual organizations. Administrative, financial, and teaching modality challenges were several priority issues for colleges and universities (Montenegro-Rueda et al., 2021). Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) find themselves in an emerging post pandemic world that may never be the same. Society returning to exclusive in-person instruction seems highly unlikely. A more likely scenario is one where in person and virtual modalities coexist into perpetuity (Tilak & Kumar, 2022). This hybridity stresses the importance of faculty and student familiarity with technical platforms in the virtual realm and will be critical for all students, but especially first-generation students (Neuwirth et al., 2020).

Given this landscape, it may be an opportune time to strengthen standards of business modeling, looking toward long-term planning to create security amid ongoing institutional

concern. The existing tactics used by higher education institutions may no longer function. Fortunately, the Five Forces model developed by Michael Porter (1980) offers a contemporary solution. The higher education landscape will become more economically focused, driven by ongoing shifts in consumer perception of higher education's credential value and with consumer's declining willingness and ability to spend the ever-increasing costs necessary to advance their education.

Market forces are omnipresent in every industry but are nevertheless often simply unfamiliar to higher education institutions. These forces have manifested as a marketization of higher education, increased consumer savvy, advancing technological advantages, greater supplier demands, and general competitive pressures (García-Morales, et al., 2021; Mause, 2009; Slaughter & Cantwell, 2012). Additionally, with national accreditation bodies now requiring more robust strategic planning as part of contemporary self-assessment and accreditation, colleges and universities will no longer be able to ignore strategic planning to account for market forces (Hinton, 2012). In fact, the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), in its yearly survey to membership and work through focus groups, has identified higher education's top five business issues and management of an uncertain economic climate was one that must be accounted for in strategic planning (NACUBO, n.d.). Finally, with a declining number of students graduating at the secondary school level (Bransberger & Michelau, 2017) and with most US institutions controlling only a local influence within their regional Carnegie distinction, there are multitude of forces that higher education institutions must account for when developing strategic planning.

As opposed to institutional strategic planning and measurements based on local mission statements, institutions may need to adopt a well-defined market analysis and necessary

associated deliverables that link strategic planning with more concrete outcomes. Governance boards and organizational management will appreciate the precision of assessing the value of organizational missions directly on their causation to organizational success. Use of a commercial model may be unfamiliar to those within academe, but this shift may serve as a needed method of survival in a hypercompetitive market.

Porter's Five Forces model is a leading theoretical approach that substantiates the importance of economic forces in establishing a strategic direction. As higher education is a profit-motivated industry offering a product that is substituted with alternatives, use of Porter's model may be feasible in determining institutional position via strategy development. Porter's model (Porter, 2008) asserts that five main forces shape industry competition and these include the 1) threats of new entrants, 2) bargaining power of suppliers (faculty), 3) bargaining power of buyers, 4) threats of substitute products, and 5) respective rivalry among the competitors. Its usage is typically seen in corporate or business-related enterprises in the United States. Additional determinants such as technology, globalization, economic conditions, and regulation, do exert influence over the institutional entities in the sector but are not deemed as official forces (Porter, 2008). The model has been used abroad to evaluate institutional competitive position in the higher education sector (Isabelle et al., 2020; Man, 2014). This model can be useful in the US sector now given the rapid changes in higher education during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strategy details how a firm will achieve exceptional performance. To define competitive success, there are two basic concepts. The first is a mindset and lies in the organization's ability to create a unique value. A unique strategic position and the associated value chain developed by the organization will create that economic value. The second is analytical and is attributed to the

structure of the industry that the organization operates in and its relative position against competition (Magretta, 2011). Porter (1980) argued that the point of competition was not to win at all costs, but to generate a profit. As competition is omnipresent in any industry, including spaces occupied by non-profits (Magretta, 2011), strategy to create unique value and sustained performance would be necessary to generate an operating surplus, an equivalent of profit. Without the ability for non-profits, such as public and private higher education institutions, to generate surplus (profit) the threat to organizational sustainability is real. Porter had established the Five Forces model to explain how an industry works and focus on the competition within the industry allows for the measurement of that superior performance (Magretta, 2011). This framework explained the profitability both across industries and within the industries in which a particular firm resides.

This case study used the Five Forces model as a template against which strategic planning processes and considerations were developed at the selected college/university campuses. These initiatives pointed to how and why these higher education institutions plan and execute to meet organizational goals. Surveys and interviews with executive campus leaders, as well as content analysis of the planning artifacts, highlighted how colleges and universities might utilize similar planning methods. The findings of this study will expand on any prior research with the application of Porter's framework as a method to define and evaluate institutional strategic planning processes at other higher education institutions. Porter's model may assist higher education leaders align these economic principles to strategic analysis and design. Review of these five distinct forces afford executive leadership an external view of the industrial segment in which their organizations operate. Using Porter's framework and given a decreasing demand

for higher education (Grawe, 2018), institutions need to establish sustained competitive

advantage to remain viable (Porter, 1980).

Background

The background for this study was positioned in the context of an overall changing higher

educational backdrop. College and university strategic planning was typically internally driven

by admission and did not consider the external landscape (Hinton, 2012). Higher education

institutions have conducted institutional planning and in some instances in a strategic fashion

(Dolence, 1994). With substantial demographic change in the US, coupled with the COVID

pandemic, the need for more consistent application of business-centric planning may prove to be

the way forward (Anctil, 2008). Campus closures because of enrollment declines and

unsustainable financial aid schemes center the need for institutions to utilize strategic planning

for institutional sustainability. With this rapid change within the higher education environment,

there is an urgency in this segment, not seen in several decades, in studying how executive

leadership will formulate strategic planning for institutional survival. Understanding executive

leadership mindsets will highlight how institutions move forward to allay their ongoing concern.

This conceptualization of strategy and the subsequent planning may have value for the segment.

Porter (1980) authored multiple frameworks for the determination of industrial structure.

The Five Forces model is a structural analysis, as it determines how an industry works by

detailing how it creates and shares value. It explains the respective industry's level of

profitability given the degree of competition within it. The development and execution of

strategy explains how an organization will achieve superior performance when facing that

competition. Success in the face of competition is not about being the best or operating to win at

all costs against industrial rivals. Generating competitive success is about creating unique value. Porter's work also serves to frame institutional strategy.

Need

The development, implementation, and execution of institutional strategic planning creates a sustained competitive advantage for survival in the hyper-competitive industry of higher education (Porter, 1980). The presence and consistency of strategic planning implementation will be critical for the longevity of these institutions. It behooves higher educational leaders to increase their understanding of strategic planning methodologies to provide the foundation for institutions to meet the needs of a vastly different demographic of students.

While literature suggested that institutional planning is active in higher education institutions, the awareness and approach to market forces is not yet as commonplace as it is in business centric industries. This deficiency in research demonstrated the need to explore both the past and current research to understand the degree of this absence of business centric planning approaches. Bryson (2018) highlighted the importance of strategic planning on how to respond to change. With the changing demographics and a change in the view of higher education value, understanding the model approach to addressing these challenges was necessary.

Purpose

The purpose of this case study analysis was to evaluate selected institutions engaged in strategic planning and determine whether market forces are considered. The analysis highlighted the attitudes, behaviors, and methods utilized by executive level administration in crafting institutional-wide strategic planning. This analysis of four public and private universities in the New York Metropolitan area of the United States allowed for the review of macro and micro

level methods, processes, and decision making in the development and implementation of strategic planning viewed through the lens of the Five Forces as defined by Porter (1980). The case study model created understanding of the motives and decisions made in creating strategic plans.

Significance

Blending the ubiquitous financial and humanitarian considerations of organizational planning in the context of a strategic planning process generates a powerful tool for higher education solvency. Zemsky et al., (2005) describe this connection as being "market-smart and mission-centered". This business-oriented strategic planning can intersect with institutional mission to impact social mobility for those external and internal to the higher education institution. The linkage between market-driven planning objectives and campus policy making may ensure financial viability while fulfilling an institutional mission. This marriage of opposing directives speaks both to the intangible goals of academic enlightenment and the tangible goals of economic advancement and social mobility. This mixture was found to be particularly important for students from lower socioeconomic statuses as they view a college degree as a steppingstone for a better economic position and the development of social capital for themselves and their families (Chan, 2016).

Porter's Five Forces model (1980) centers the awareness on prevailing market forces to enhance an institution's ability to withstand challenges to long term viability while staying true to mission for more equitable outcomes for all constituencies. Economic and social mobility is important for favorable life trajectories, and this is particularly acute and holds greater significance for underrepresented populations given the exponential impact juxtaposed with those who have existing exposure the higher education. Higher education institutions must

remain viable to continue serving this mission, as many of them do. That long-term viability may be best achieved and sustained through market driven strategic planning.

Research Questions

To better position higher education institutional executive leaders to craft and execute strategic plans that meet sustainable initiatives and support the mission, this research addressed these specific questions:

RQ1: How does higher education executive leadership account for market forces in the development of strategic plans?

RQ2: How did market analysis infuse into the strategic planning process?

RQ3: Does higher education executive leadership believe that market analysis helps to create a more effective strategic plan?

Definitions

Strategic Planning

The process of strategic planning was defined by Bryson (2018) as "a deliberate, disciplined approach to producing fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it" (p. 8).

The Society of University and College Planning (SCUP) described strategic planning as a "deliberate, disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an institution is, what it does, and why it does it" (SCUP, n.d.).

Strategic Positioning

Porter (1996) stated that strategic positioning "means performing *different* activities from rivals' or performing similar activities in *different* ways". Strategy differs from operational effectiveness in that "operational effectiveness (OE) means performing similar activities *better*

than rivals perform them" (p. 62). It is about the selection of a value proposition opposed to that of rivals. Positioning can be based upon customer needs, customer accessibility, or a variety of products and services.

Strategy

The most significant term to define for this case study is *strategy*. Porter (1996) explained strategy as "deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value" (p. 39). Magretta (2011) furthered this understanding of Porter's definition as "the set of integrated choices that define how you will achieve superior performance in the face of competition…it's the positioning you choose that will result in achieving the goal" (p. 219).

Industry Structure

The underlining characteristics, including economic and technological, that contribute to the competitive environment. Review of the structure is necessary to understand the degree of competition and the potential to generate profit (surplus) for the firm (Porter, 1980).

Five Forces Model

Porter (2008) framework assessed competition in an industry by analyzing the structure of the industry. This analysis was a method for organizations to consider a type of strategy that harnessed these forces to establish a beneficial and unique strategic positioning. These five forces included the bargaining power of buyers, the bargaining power of suppliers, the threat of substitutes, the threat of new entrants, and rivalry amongst existing competitors.

Competition

Magretta (2011) stated that Porter's definition was more comprehensive than just a focus on rivals. "Competition is the tug of war over profits that occurs not just between rivals but also

between a company and its customers, its suppliers, makers of substitutes, and potential new entrants" (p. 212).

Competitive Advantage

Porter (1985) defined competitive advantage as profitability sustained at a higher level than that of rivals. A firm's competitive advantage is generated from higher prices, lower costs, or some combination of each.

Value Creation

Value creation is a process where firms transform inputs into products and services that exceed the value of those inputs. For-profits create economic value and non-profits achieve social objectives with the most efficiency possible (Magretta, 2011).

Research Design

This research was a qualitative case study based upon the model presented by Creswell and Creswell (2018). This design sought to raise awareness of the impact of market forces on the development of strategic plans. The design was intended to explore the creation and execution of institutional-wide strategic planning by examining five institutions as examples. This study provided an in-depth analysis of the strategic planning process.

To provide this depth of analysis, multiple data collection methods include:

1. Document review of institutional strategic plans.

2. Survey instrument sent to executive higher education leadership.

3. Open-ended, but semi-structured interviews with executive higher education leadership.

4. Researcher notes and journal entries collected throughout the research study.

The study was based upon a convenience sample. Further, the use of purpose sampling was utilized to identify one or more higher education institutions or state systems that have posted strategic planning processes on their respective websites. Creswell and Creswell (2018) described purposeful sampling as a method that allows a researcher to choose institutions and specific individuals to create understanding of the research problem, the research question, and fundamental experiences in the study.

The researcher notes and journal entries were included in this data analysis process both as a method to support the researcher's understanding of the subject's interviews as well as an acknowledgement that the researcher held biases. These notes and journal entries allowed for a deeper experience of the case study localities while permitting the researcher the opportunity to be transparent with how his attitudes, values, and biases shape the overall account of the research study.

Assumptions

Qualitative research is rooted in axiological, epistemological, methodological, and ontological assumptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The axiological acknowledges the researcher's biases and looks to engage the researcher in discovering how those biases may form the narrative of the study. The epistemological states that knowledge is obtained through the understanding of subjective experiences thus the researcher must engage deeply with participants in the field. The methodological is an induction and the data guide their research trajectory as it is collected and analyzed. The ontological highlights that researchers must be aware of many realities and report these multiple realities.

It was assumed that participants would be truthful in their responses. Additionally, the inclusion criteria for participants was appropriate given the researcher's confidence in the knowledge and experience of participants to appropriately answer the interview question set.

Finally, the participants elected to participate based on their willingness to participate and not any other incentive.

Researchers must consider ethics in gathering data prior to interviewing participants after seeking permission to do so (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The US Department of Health and Human Services' *Belmont Report* (1979) guided the ethical principles for researchers when designing and conducting their research. The case study and data collection methods adhered to these principles given that a participant could partake in or leave the study voluntarily, that the participation posed minimal risk to the participants, and that the selection of the participants was related to the exact issue being researched.

Limitations

Qualitative research is a suitable selection when examining this research topic. Creswell and Creswell (2018) indicated that an analysis based on approximately four to five case studies was reasonable. Since the participants have association with the institution or system and have direct awareness of the strategic planning process, a generalization can be made on the use of the market forces in the consideration strategic planning. This generalization does not directly assess the performance of the strategic plan. The primary focus of the research was whether higher education executive leaders consider market forces when developing such plans.

One limitation of the Porter's Five Forces model was that its use was mostly evident in traditional business or commercialized industries. Additionally, the model has primarily been seen in nationalized education systems outside of the US. Finally, the model was created over 40 years ago. This study intended to fill this gap by analyzing the model's use in US higher education institutions.

Organization of Study

Demand for higher education is in decline (Grawe, 2018), but that decline is uneven across the industry. Institutions with nondescript brands, regional institutions, and institutions educating many underserved minorities face substantial threats to their business models. Strategic planning in higher education serves as a critical link for the ongoing concern of viability of higher education institutions across the country. Porter's (1980) Five Forces model served as a framework to craft future focused plans.

Equally important was an imperative for higher education leadership to examine how business centric strategic planning can also prepare their organizations for the development of socially and culturally responsive police and practices. Developing initiatives that serve underrepresented populations that have historically not been served well by higher education, as evidenced by academic achievement gaps (Mishra, 2020), may create a more responsive environment. Higher education executive leadership should consider reframing their approaches to both strategic planning and serving the changing demographics of the students that will be attending in the immediate future.

Chapter 2 highlights this theoretical framework and provide a review of the existing literature that forms the foundation of this case study research. Chapter 3 describes in full detail the research design, methodology, and collection methods to respond to the research question. Chapter 4 presents a full analysis of the data collected. Lastly, Chapter 5 provides a summary of the research findings, draws observations, discusses implications of the findings, and offers recommendations to executive higher education leadership. These recommendations address both institutional viability and the clients whom they serve.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focused on the following themes: 1) demonstration of higher education institutional planning as part of accreditation process; 2)shifts in the environment of higher education; 3) internal institutional strategic planning and focus on future to foster sustainability; 4) business centric planning versus higher education planning; 5) commercialized practices; 6) opportunity for a focused approach to institutional planning: Porter's model; 7) impact of Porter's model in business; 8) Porter's model in international education; 9) linking institutional planning to social mobility.

This case study described institutions that are currently engaged in or have been engaged in strategic planning to gauge the consideration of market forces in addition to institutional mission in the development of strategic plans. This case study may be vital for understanding how higher education leaders engage in contemporary strategic planning that promotes viability amid the ongoing concerns inherent in a hypercompetitive environment. A contemporary framework developed from Porter's model (1980) creates strategic plans for institutions that may no longer be viable without a course correction from insufficient institutional planning.

Method of Search

The method of search included peer-reviewed journals, texts, reports, and publications. These resources were discovered via search on library databases, Google Scholar, and through works referenced in initial artifacts sourced. Search terms included "strategic planning", "strategic plans", "strategy", "commercialization in higher education", "colleges and universities", "higher education", "leadership decision making", "organizational change", "market forces", "board of trustees", "boards of governance", and "competitive advantage".

Primary focus was placed on journals from widely recognized publications, organizations, and associations in the higher education sector. A significant challenge was the dearth of research in respected journals related to strategic planning in higher education. Similarly, there was a parallel challenge to the age of Porter's work and a lack of application to the US educational system. More evidence of usage of the Five Forces model was evident in international educational systems that are nationalized, differing from the US.

Demonstration of Higher Education Institutional Planning as Part of Accreditation Process

The accreditation process for higher education in the US is a shared, peer-reviewed practice that emphasizes continuous improvement, assesses academic quality, and advances public accountability of individual institutions and select academic programs (Eaton, 2015). Most regional accreditation bodies express requirements for these distinct yet interconnected sections of *institutional planning.* This primarily focused on areas related to academic quality, financial compliance, and organizational effectiveness measures. Most accreditation commissions do not make explicit reference to the term or process known as *strategic planning* despite standards that imply an institutional commitment to a planning process.

Institutional plans are required by the regional accreditation bodies in the US. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) is a non-governmental agency that provides quality control in the accreditation process of other organizations, most notably regionally. Regional accrediting commissions are longstanding accrediting organizations. The United States has six accreditation regions that include the New England, Middle States, North Central, Southern, Western and Northwest regions. There are seven commissions within these six regions, with the Western region having two agencies within the regional commission. Common among each regional commission is the holistic review of the institution and not simply selected

programming. The regional organizations in the US include the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges: Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC); the Higher Learning Commission (HLC); the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE); the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE); the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU); the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC); and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges: Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC).

These regional commissions referenced a strategic or institutional planning requirement for the affirmation of the accreditation process. Five of the six regional commissions reference institutional mission/purpose as the primary driver of this planning. This suggests a requirement for an internally driven planning process. Each of the specific commissions refer to strategic or institutional planning. These are exhibited below:

The New England Commission of Higher Education's standard 2.3 expected that the "institution plans beyond a short-term horizon, including strategic planning that involves realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. The results of strategic planning are implemented in all units of the institution through financial, academic, enrollment, and other supporting plans" (NECHE, n.d.). The Middle States Commission on Higher Education expect that "institutional objectives, both institution-wide and for individual units, which are clearly stated, assessed appropriately, linked to mission and goal achievement, reflect conclusions drawn from assessment results, and are used for planning and resource allocation" (MSCHE, n.d.). Higher Learning Commission stated that "the institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement and the institution allocates its resources in alignment with its

mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes, and affiliated centers" (HLC, n.d.).

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges stated that "the institution engages in ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that (a) focus on institutional quality and effectiveness and (b) incorporate a systematic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission" (SACSCOC, n.d.). The Western Association of Schools and Colleges: Senior College and University Commission standard 3.7 stated that "the institution's organizational structures and decision-making processes are clear and consistent with its purposes, support effective decision making, and place priority on sustaining institutional capacity and educational effectiveness" (WSCUC, n.d.). The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities expected that "the institution sets and articulates meaningful goals, objectives, and indicators of its goals to define mission fulfillment and to improve its effectiveness in the context of and in comparison, with regional and national peer institutions" (NWCCU, n.d.).

Strategic plans were expected to be articulated through self-study, with most agencies providing no singular direction on the specifics of that plan. The New England Commission of Higher Education had direct mention of the term "*strategic planning*." Regardless of the mention, the strategic planning artifact was an internally created document that may yield a significant degree of self-interest. This process had limitations in that it also created uniformity across the higher education segment. The resultant planning can be described as overly conservative in both approach and effectiveness (Erekson & Williams, 2022).

Strategic planning in higher education institutions has been "viewed as a tool to articulate institutional mission and vision" (Hinton, 2012, p. 7). The resultant planning developed

objectives from the same mission statement-centric lens. The subsequent artifact developed frequently lacks a consideration of market forces that shape the competition within the industry. Higher education institutions have tended to position themselves as a stalwart for the greater good, thereby not accounting for competitive influences in their strategic planning process. This included the idea of education as a product and with students acting as customers. "…[C]orporations developed their planning processes based on market data and customer-driven production, academe was limited in the data it could bring to bear on its issues and did not view itself as serving customers, (p. 7). This prevailing approach was myopic and, without market awareness, limited the opportunity for nondescript institutions to navigate a rapidly changing landscape (Hassanien, 2017).

Aponte (2011) suggested that higher education institutions have utilized strategic planning with the industry's origins in military and business segments. While this use of strategy was present, colleges and universities may not have consistently applied the principles of strategic planning. Fortunately, colleges and universities have several organizations that provide guidance on how to develop these plans. The Society of University and College Planning (SCUP) described strategic planning as a "deliberate, disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an institution is, what it does, and why it does it" (SCUP, n.d.). This again focused on mission as the primary driver. The National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), in its yearly survey to membership and work through focus groups, had identified the top five business issues in higher education. They point to management of an uncertain economic climate as one that must be accounted for in a strategic planning process (NACUBO, n.d.). Review of both external and internal conditions and constraints served in the development of strategic planning for higher education institutions.

Shifts in the Environment of Higher Education

The landscape of higher education institutions in the Northeastern US has changed over the last two decades. That change was most reflected in the population demographics of the country. Grawe (2018) highlighted the precipitous decline in the demand for higher education because of the decline in birth rates during the Great Recession of 2008-2009. The decline in revenues and lower enrollments in higher education due to the COVID pandemic's economic impacts over the last several years had accelerated the likelihood of mergers, acquisitions, or even failures of institutions across the US. This dynamic will be most pronounced in the New England region but will expand to the entire Northeastern US region as well (Yao, 2020). The diversity of the students that are entering higher education, particularly in the Northeastern US, has forced many higher education institutions to change focus. With an influx of Asian-American and Hispanic/Latino/a/ freshman, varied racial and ethnic categories has begun to change the demographics of new First Time in College (FTIC) students (NSC, Spring 2022). Further complicating the matter was the overall reduction in higher education enrollment since the pandemic. Fischer (2022) reported that over 1 million students disappeared from participation in higher education during the COVID pandemic. Fewer students mean that national brand recognized colleges and universities seek to draw from student populations that they may not have considered for admission in the past. This further compounded the enrollment challenges for lesser-known institutions and those with limited regional appeal (Grawe, 2018).

In the Northeastern US, for example, three states faced a unique challenge with no statewide or systemwide body that coordinates or governs public postsecondary education. Described as an *administrative/service agency*, only two states, Delaware and New Jersey, and the District of Columbia operated such a system (Education Commission of the States, n.d.). This

made addressing changing organizational needs at a strategic level an even greater challenge. Without a central authority to address and invest in meeting the needs of changing demographics on a macro-level, institutions within the Northeastern region may need to independently adjust their respective institutional approach toward planning. This added pressure to an already difficult process to navigate.

With the diversity of college aged students changing rapidly, it followed that higher education institutions must change their approaches well. Further, an increase in skepticism nationally has created a public perception threat for these higher education institutions. Brink (2022) wrote that the public opinion of higher education remains mixed with less than half of Americans believing that the economic benefits of a higher education outweigh the costs. Schleifer et al. (2022) pointed to a particularly telling fact that younger generations that don't hold advanced degrees have an elevated degree of skepticism about the value of achieving the credential.

Sedmak (2022) stated within a National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) report that the COVID pandemic had an oversized impact on the enrollment of college aged students. The pandemic was an extraordinary event that may have pronounced effects for years and decades to come. Brown (2018) wrote about these greater struggles with many varied thoughts on what the central issues were in higher education and how to correct these to encourage greater enrollment. Brown (2018) found that regardless of the political bias of the respondents, most generally agreed that higher education has a problem in remaining relevant to younger generations. This scenario was one that higher education institutions must now consider as a viable threat to continuing operations.

Technological Disruption

Technological disruption in higher education contributed to changing views of the industry. Govindarajan and Srivastava (2020) wrote that the faculty lecturing model does not need to be personal and can be delivered via technological platforms to be consumed on a student's own time. University faculty can supply such basic parts of curriculum delivery via learning management systems or platforms like Coursera. Norris and Lefrere (2011) spoke to a pattern of the unbundling and reinvention of the model of teaching and learning that centered greater attention on the value aspect of higher education. Whereas the past primary focus of students was on institutional reputation via instructional quality, an adjusted focus on value now impacts higher educational institutions.

One such impact was the significant change in the roles and responsibilities within the human resources and information technology infrastructure of the university (Krishnamurthy, 2020). Higher education institutions need to adjust to meet value expectations of their clientele. Students no longer unilaterally seek a residential experience that places their professional employment and other personal goals on hold. If higher education institutions fail to account for newfound competition varied nontraditional online education providers built on the value proposition of speedy time toward degree completion at lower costs then many of these institutions risk further reduced enrollments (McHenry, 2016).

Internal Institutional Strategic Planning and Focus on Future to Foster Sustainability

Students viewed themselves as customers that are paying for educational value for their expenditures. Those customers sought to attend those institutions that realized that expectation (Flynn & Vredevoogd, 2010). As higher education institutions compete for students, strategy will be the antidote to that competition (Magretta, 2011). Yet, colleges and universities have

found themselves in a predicament related to strategic planning as most of these plans are internally derived and not future focused, lacking support for the ongoing concern and sustainability of the institution (Hinton, 2012). Effective mapping must consider the market forces that institutions inevitably face. Keller (1983) spoke to the threats and opportunities associated with competition between institutions. Porter (1980) stated that these plans were crafted for both viability as well as for a sustained competitive advantage. With governmental funding support of higher education generally reduced since the 1970s in most US states, both public and private institutions alike have found that their business models have become more tuition revenue dependent due to declines in state aid for public and private institutions (Mitchell et al., 2019). As a result of declining governmental support, tuition had contributed an increased percentage of higher education revenue after economic recessions in the US (Gansemer-Topf et al., 2018). These economic conditions have an impact on the competition for student enrollment, and planning may need to be more strategically focused.

Two professional organizations spoke directly to the importance of this strategic planning for the sustainability of higher education institutions. Each offered resources to assist in understanding the framework for the preparing these strategic plans. The Association of Governing Boards (AGB) spoke to the merits of strategic planning and the transformational utility it offered for both public and independent institutions alike (AGB, n.d.). The American Council of Education (ACE) provided many "toolkits" for use by its members. One such resource available was for the development of strategic planning to address short-term and long-term direction (ACE, n.d.). While these organizations provided easily accessible professional resources, it was not clear from the corresponding websites if formal strategic planning models were utilized in the respective institutional planning process and/or as part of the accreditation

review. Oher researchers in the field have developed models and provided context and rationale for strategic planning. Bryson (2018) developed one such model for the strategic planning efforts for public and nonprofit organizations. Strategic planning was critical for institutions to foresee and react to changing environmental conditions. Stephens (2017) described strategic planning as a method to manage change with the ability to respond to ever-changing external environments. There were many different approaches to the strategic planning process and higher education institutions can be successful in adopting one that fits the organization's circumstances.

Development and execution of a strategy would produce results only if the resultant planning addressed how an organization generated a sustained competitive advantage. Porter (2008) illustrated that the competitive rivalry that existed within an industry works against an institution's ability to maintain a competitive advantage. Porter's (1980) Five Forces model is a visualization of this competition for profits present in every industry, including in higher education. Successful performance is about creating value and conducting organizational activities differently. Magretta (2011) highlighted that strategy is the antidote to competition and includes the willingness to accept an organization's limits. There are five basic tests that a strategy must pass to be a *good* strategy (Porter, 2008). Those include a unique value proposition; tailored value chain; accepting tradeoffs; value chain activities that must relate to each other described as fit; and the need for continuity.

Baum et al. (2013) highlighted that these market forces contributed to the increasing of costs of producing and delivering higher education. Porter (2008) referred to these as suppliers and the perpetual rising tuition at higher education institutions represented the underpinning of these cost inputs. Higher education costs have generally climbed faster than those in many other industries and have a direct connection to the increasing price paid to suppliers of higher

education over time. Baumol's (1993) "cost disease*"* theory does not highlight every force that attributes to higher education's cost changes over time, but it is a theoretical framework serving as a base. Baumol's "cost disease*"* theory explains that "technological progress drives employment into those industrial segments that are resistant to productivity gains" (The Economist, 2019, p. 65). The theory proposed that without technological innovation throughout an economy, compensation will be competitive relative to other sectors due to the lack of productivity gains in those other respective sectors. Without these efficiency gains, prices will rise within the segment. Higher education is largely still produced in the same labor-intensive design since the 1950s. For higher education, this results in increased labor costs that influence the long-term trend of increasing college and university costs (Baumol, 1993).

Segments within the higher educational industry, particularly those of elite status and those institutions seeking to become more selective, continue to compete directly with rivals as opposed to seeking a unique, sustainable position. The competition is one focused on "to being the best" and not one driven to being unique. This kind of competition is ultimately a race to the bottom (Magretta, 2011). This race to the bottom was exactly what Porter (1980) termed as a significant misunderstanding of the true nature of competition. Regardless, these approaches continue to burden institutions with non-descript brands and reputations. Critically important to the health of these higher education institutions with lower reputational rankings will be the ability to increase expenditures. Whether these expenditures will be generated given decreasing demand and increased competition within industry (Grawe, 2018) remained to be seen.

An oversaturation of higher education institutions has potentially contributed to the challenges faced by the industry after the COVID pandemic. Trow's (1973) study of higher education explored the challenges of expanding the segment from elite to universal education.

Figueiredo et al. (2015) have found that the higher education sector may be generating graduates with education beyond the basic needs of the labor market. As a result, the labor market has experienced difficulties in correcting supply and demand discrepancies. This leads to credentialing inflation, which is best described as a continuous loop of educational and occupational requirement increases (Collins, 2002). Combine this with the changing demographics in the US, a declining high school population, and the COVID pandemic, and an increase in mergers, consolidations, and acquisitions in the years to come appears likely. Harman and Harman (2008) found these organizational combining methods have been utilized by college and university boards of governance and state governmental agencies to address institutional difficulties. A primary rationale for these considerations was declining enrollment, but these also were modes to increase operational efficiency through cost savings and/or service enhancements.

Mergers, consolidations, and acquisitions were a means for higher education institutions to maintain their ongoing concerns in an industry that is as competitive as any other. The seemingly continuous cycle of declining enrollments and declining fiscal support elevates the challenges for higher education institutions in the US. Historically, many examples of these actions involved smaller and regional schools. The primary rationale for the merger was driven by a need to consolidate resources, share services, improve efficiency, and facilitate mutual growth (Martin & Samuels, 1994). Examples of US higher education institution mergers now include both public and private institutions of varied sizes, resources, national rankings, and institutional missions.

A TIAA Institute report (Azziz et al., 2017) found at least one hundred private, nonprofit closures in higher education since 2009. Further, the report found twelve closures in the decade of the 2000s and thirty-seven more in the decade of 2010s. The category of schools included

two-year and four-year schools, including master and doctoral granting colleges and universities. Also represented were medical, arts, business, and other specialty institutions (Hentschke et al., 2017). The trends show an existing and increasing number of mergers, consolidations, and acquisitions in the US (Azziz et al., 2017). With the pandemic accelerating many of the reasons why colleges and universities seek these arrangements, there may likely be an increasing number to come in the decade of the 2020s and beyond.

Elite, highly selective institutions with strong donorship and endowments will likely survive the decreasing demand for higher education in the US (Grawe, 2018). Higher education institutions with less selective brands will be under greater stress in the coming years given fewer resources from external and internal sources. The predictive forecast of a four percent decrease in high school graduates from 2018 to 2027 (Bransberger & Michelau, 2017), is an inverse of the 6% growth period of 2009 to 2018 and a significant threat. Again, a period of decline in enrollment for less selective institutions appears likely. This decline in enrollment will not equitable across the US as some regions will experience more precipitous declines, with the most pronounced impact in the Northeast as evidenced by a 25% decrease in high school graduates (Grawe, 2018).

Business Centric Planning Versus Higher Education Planning

Business planning created a problem for higher education institutions as these considerations may be contrary historically to normal higher education terminology. However, higher education institutions operated within an industrial segment and were more business related than they appear when only viewing them from their stated missions of advancing the greater public good. Strategic planning lets institutions plot a course to address economics and find a niche in the landscape (Ellis, 2010; Flynn & Vredevoogd, 2010; Poister, 2010). While

accreditors may not require plans that focus on sustained competitive advantage, institutions would be well served by accounting for competitive viability through strategic planning. Boards of governance value business centric planning, possibly even more so now given the challenges of the post pandemic landscape. These boards understand that higher education institutions generate and capture value within the industrial segment much like other industries (Kurznack et.al., 2021). Porter (2008) has researched and developed frameworks on this value creation and capture and applied them to strategies surrounding competitive advantage.

Value Creation and Capture

Higher education institutions operate similarly to firms in other industries in that economic value was created and captured (Zott, 2011). These institutions operated individualized business models orientated to the market segment. The most traditional components of higher education institutions were teaching and research. The third type of value creation was the transfer of knowledge to the commercial sector. This commercialized transfer impacted both the incentivization and governance structure of institutions of higher education. The use of a business model from Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010) served as a method to understand these three distinct creations of value and transfer. The value distribution of this value creation changes the dynamic of an institution thought to be a goodwill to constituents whether it be public or private. Higher education institutions were typically thought to be engines of education to the masses and not traditionally thought of as economic engines. Institutions must be an economic output generator to continue operating amid ongoing threats to viability.

College and university professors were critical in value creation through their teaching. This act of teaching was considered value added as the process transformed resources into a finished product of graduates that then are acquired by employers (Christensen & Eyring, 2011).

From an economic perspective the employer was a customer with a willingness to compensate the students given this value that had been created by the university. But since this value was not typically captured by the university, this model was not a sustainable one (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010).

Student as Consumer

Considering students as a customer of the institution with a value distributed across the various segments within the university is a viable and more practical model in which to determine sustainability (Weisbrod et al., 2008). This model considered students as the customers with a willingness to pay tuition given the perceived value that the degree and reputation will provide them in the employment market. There were two distinct customers that institutions were serving, the student and the employer. Only from the student does the institution capture this value. In this circumstance the value captured was in the form of tuition dollars from the student. Students will pay as much as the future income potential will afford. The higher the perception of the institution, the higher this earning potential becomes, and thus the higher the tuition the institution can charge. (Gaus & Raith, 2016)

Much as teaching was the core competency for higher education, research activities were economic drivers for universities. As such these were considered part of an institution's business modeling. Research was a value creation activity with a capture that was mainly in non-monetary forms such as publications, patents, and reputational rankings of the institution (Gaus & Raith, 2016). With salary and other costs inputs that exceeded the value of these captures, these business models do not constitute a sustainable direction. The need to augment these cost inputs via other revenue sources. Students as customers that subsidized the research activities of the

university strengthens the argument universities operated in a commercialized state (Gaus & Raith, 2016).

Private Versus Public Institutions

Even among varied governance structures of higher education institutions, a multi-customer focus became clear. While private institutions rely on students as a source of revenue to fund research activities, most private institutions must find funding sources outside of this tuition driven business model. Fundraising from donors, foundations, industry segments support these schools considerably (Stephan, 2001). Public institutions find themselves in similar circumstances with an additional customer, state, and federal governments, giving this source of support. Public institutions, with government funding to support the social focus of their enterprise, operated through a similar though distinct business model from the private ones (Gaus & Raith, 2016).

The most pertinent variation in the business models between public and private institutions was the incentivization within the model. In theory, private institutions had an ability to choose their customers while public institutions had a muted ability to do so given the funding connection to the governmental agency (Weisbrod et al., 2008).

Transfer of Value to Market

The transfer of teaching and research to the market required expertise that lies outside of the university. Customer segments and distribution channels that move this knowledge capital to fruition depended upon further research and development, marketing investment, and strategic and operational planning experts. Additional professionals must move this intellectual property to market to drive the overall value creation and distribution system for optimization and institutional gain (Gaus & Raith, 2016).

These teaching and research functions of higher education institutions transferred to commercial markets via existing firms and startup ventures, the funds generated resembled that of tuition from students. Subsequently, the relative centrality of that tuition stream diminished. If the funds from these ventures were sufficient, then the degree of importance for tuition decreased. For private institutions, the governance structure adjusted over time to be more open to these commercialized entities. For a public institution this development in the commercialized space reduced the relative importance and reliance on governmental agencies. Etzkowitz (2008) described this interplay of public university, private industry, and government agencies as the "Triple Helix". Public institutions may position themselves with greater degree of independence (O'Flynn, 2007) to determine new priorities that change governance and incentivization. Private institutions, in contrast, may find themselves in an expanded ecosystem given the new customers developed from the commercialization of intellectual capital.

Commercialization of higher education institutions, both public and private, may be a reasonable alternative to decreasing budgetary support. The revenues drawn from propriety sources can be utilized to bolster teaching (Stephan, 2001) or to retain human resources, primarily faculty (Nicolaou & Birley, 2003). Private and public institutions may also find that a distribution channel that transfers intellectual capital changes the nature of the traditional university (Mowery et al., 2001). Many within these higher education segments have trepidation with this capitalization of knowledge that leads to the potential of traditional disciplines being identified for cancellation within the academic offerings (van Looy et al., 2004).

Commercialized Practices

The importance of strategic planning was evident in business-related industries and education-related industries, including higher education. While primarily executed in the

business sector, strategic planning became part of higher education in the 1950s during a higher education planning meeting at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and later as part of the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) in the 1960s (Dooris, 2002). Strategic planning remained a prescribed process in which higher educational institutions develop goals and objectives based on organizational needs (Bryson, 2018; Ellis, 2010). While the terminology utilized between each industry varies, these practices emphasized similar intentions. Further, business related concepts, such as intellectual property development, provided evidence of business-like practices conducted by higher education institutions. This type of commercialization demonstrated that colleges and universities are business-related entities and the use of strategic planning with focus on market forces can allow universities to remain viable given this structure.

Types of Commercialization and Role of Strategic Planning

Commercialized concepts take many forms in higher education institutions. Notably, the use of strategic planning and protection of intellectual property take a prominent place in the literature. Berman (2008) suggested that patenting increased significantly beginning in the 1980s at college and universities across the country. Mowery (2001) makes similar connections to the proliferation of technology transfer offices. At this same time, a variety of researchers have explored the concept of students positioned as customers (Washburn, 2006; Tuchman, 2009). Institutions were becoming more likely to seek private interests to position themselves better in a competitive marketplace and have minimized the historical public good mission that formed a basis for institutions for centuries at the same time they argue for the benefits of capitalism in academia (Glenna et al., 2007).

Colyvas and Powell (2006) studied how commercialization took hold within universities. The focus of their research was on the transfer of technology to the marketplace at Stanford University that led to an overall proliferation of intellectual capital protections via patent, licensing, and other invention disclosure. Kleinman and Osley-Thomas (2014) explored the legitimacy of commercialization practices in higher education in the areas of research, administration, and teaching. Inclusive within these sources were these intellectual property protections in research, strategic planning in administrative functions, and finally the concept of *student as consumer* and *education as product* in teaching missions. Kleinman and Osley-Thomas (2014) explored this legitimacy of these business concepts by analyzing two professional publications respected in the higher education from 1960-2010, *AGB Reports* (currently *Trusteeship*) published by the Association of Governing Boards and *Liberal Education* published by the American Association of Colleges and Universities.

Kleinman and Osley-Thomas (2014) found variation across the authors and across time in all three categories and within the two distinct professional publications. The protections of intellectual property and strategic planning were more widely viewed as legitimate to higher education employees as opposed to the concepts of *student as consumer* and *education as product*. While this variation in perceived legitimacy was consistent across the two publications, greater support for business related concepts were found in the *AGB Reports* compared with beliefs in *Liberal Education*. With the target audience primarily being university professorship for *Liberal Education* and being executive administrators and governing boards to *AGB Reports*, the researchers expected these variations.

While there are different schools of thought related to business concepts leading the direction of institutions of higher learning, other perspectives were not viewed as separate and

distinct. Bok (2003) wrote that the benefits of intellectual property protections were both financial and served a greater good. This combination strengthened the premise and legitimacy of universities taking actions to maintain their financial stability while also being congruent to their academic mission.

Birnbaum (2000) highlighted that colleges and universities employed the use of strategic planning as early as the 1970s, and the prominence of these methods has risen since that time. Kleinman and Osley-Thomas (2014) concluded that strategic planning use in higher education had a utility and was viewed as appropriate across the various constituents within colleges and universities. There were some distracting views that point to the minimal production of quantifiable results. Bornstein (2001) contended that strategic planning had not yielded the results as promised. While there is some disagreement of the success rates in higher education, strategic planning has been accepted as necessary practice. Strategic planning does not come with an assumption that the higher education segment must act exactly as a business enterprise. It was viewed as malleable to serve university mission in a manner that maintained a distinction from corporate operation (Kleinman & Osley-Thomas, 2014).

The concepts of *students as consumer* and *education as product* appeared to have less consensus across the higher education community when examining *AGB Reports* and *Liberal Education.* Greater alignment between faculty ranks and executive administration was needed as these dual concepts appear to be seen as a threat an institution of higher education's centrality. Some were concerned that "consumer" would become the primary focus of universities while others asserted this may be the pathway toward viability. This suggested that an ongoing cultural contradiction existed within these institutional settings (Vallas & Kleinman, 2008). This may be suggestive of the inconsistency of strategic planning in terms of basing execution on goals and

quantitative metrics. This may also suggest that institutional planning had not yet fully manifested a robust organizational strategy in some instances.

Opportunity for Focused Approach to Institutional Planning: Porter's Model

Given the challenges faced by higher education institutions in the next decade, strategic planning will become critically important. Colleges and universities can take advantage of the impending economic circumstances and accept a more business focused approach tin their planning to cultivate institutional sustainability. For this to occur, higher education institutions need to address market forces at a rate not seen in existing higher education planning. One model that may assist higher education institutions in accounting for market forces when creating strategic plans is Porter's (1980) Five Forces model.

Porter (1980) asserted that the central tenet of competition was not simply besting your rival but generating profit. Porter stated that these Five Forces: rivalry among existing competitors; the bargaining power of buyers; the bargaining power of suppliers; the threat of substitutes; and a threat of new entrants determine an industry's structure. His design explained how industries worked and how each created and distributed the value created. In essence, it explained the industrial profitability potential (Magretta, 2011).

Porter's Five Forces (1980) is also a tool to formulate and assess institutional strategy. Porter defined strategy as a method in which organizations achieve superior performance in the competitive landscape. Prior to Porter's Five Forces the predominant tool was the SWOT analysis. Porter sought to align economic principles to strategic analysis, something that SWOT analysis did not provide. Another limitation of SWOT analysis was a level of bias from management of the organization, and these typically did not consider underlying economic principles (Everett, 2014).

Porter stated that organizations must understand fundamental economic circumstances before estimating their own performance potential. The five forces answered the critical question of what was occurring in the industrial space. Porter believed that an understanding of the structure was a more useful tool to understanding competition rather than cataloging the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that are generated in the SWOT analysis. Porter (1980) devised the five forces because the of baseline relationships that exist in all commerce: those between buyer and seller; seller and supplier; rival to rival; and supply to demand. These concepts were consideration through the five forces and helped executive leadership understand the structural forces that existed in every industry and how these forces impacted the ability to predictably generate profits.

Porter (1980) did contend that there were other factors present, but these were not necessarily structural. One such factor was government regulation. In the discussion of higher education, government regulation was more relevant particularly in the public sector due to regulatory oversight and funding schemes (Kaplin & Lee, 2020). Porter additionally highlighted technologies as well as what he refers to as complements that can impact demand for a respective industry's product or service.

Magretta (2011) highlighted that Porter's Five Forces explain the economic value created by an industry and how that value was ultimately divided among all participants in the industry. The utility of the five forces was articulating and accounting for the complexities of competition and provided direction on positioning and subsequent tactics to improve the organization's performance, primarily in profitability. Organizations that understood industry structure have an elevated understanding of how to develop and take advantage of these strategic initiatives for the organization's benefit.

Impact of Porter's Model in Business

Porter's Five Forces model has been applied in a multitude of industries to evaluate competitiveness as well as to set strategic direction for individual firms in a respective industry (Dobbs, 2014). Man (2016) applied the model to Malaysia Airlines to confirm actions required to continue profitable operations and the forces' relative influence on supply chain management principles. Additionally, the application of the model subsequently identified gaps of other potential forces impacting the company and industry. Environmental uncertainty after two catastrophic incidents highlighted the inability of the firm to predict future trends given existing market conditions. Finally, as the role of government as a market force raised the level of environmental uncertainty, the consideration of government as a standard force was forged.

Isabelle et al. (2020) similarly applied Porter's Five Forces on two distinct firms, contrasted by a resource-based, capital-intensive industry against a knowledge-based, labor-intensive industry. The study confirmed the relevance of the original five forces along and proposed an additional four forces including the exposure to globalization, threats of digitalization, level of competitor innovation, and industry exposure to regulation/deregulation. The side-by-side comparison of the respective mining and information technology industries was beneficial to show the relevance of Porter's original model analysis of the firm's competitiveness in these industries as well as the likely strategic actions taken to establish unique positioning.

The practical applications of the five forces have also proved to be challenging. A lack of practical understanding of the model by professors and strategists and the very layout of Porter's *Competitive Strategy* were two examples (Dobbs, 2014). Additionally, Porter himself lamented the lack of quantitative analysis and the underutilization of the strategic implications of the model (Porter, 2008) as contributing factors to the dearth of wide scale applications. This

absence had been present in the literature review analysis of the domestic US higher education industry as opposed to the five forces analysis used to evaluate international education systems. The use of the comparative analysis as presented by Isabelle et al. (2020) can prove useful in review of domestic versus international educational systems and in varied state government structures.

The elements found to be beneficial internationally provided insight to the utility of a more business focused approach in US higher education institutions. Market forces were present in higher education and were personified as students, instructors, and rival institutions. The productivity outputs of these market forces included the increase in enrollments beginning in the 1960s and through the 1990s. Additionally, the analysis accounts for a substantial differentiation of the types of students, or buyers (Porter, 2008), including significant gains realized with women, underrepresented minorities, and older, adult aged students. Lastly, the expansion of other types of educational options, or substitutes (Porter, 2008), competed directly with traditional four-year residential institutions. Some of these included the establishment of community college systems in the 1960s and the inception of a new sector: for-profit higher education. Federal and state governments exhibited a force-like role as well since government grant aid subsidized some educational expenses. Over the last two decades shifting priorities at the federal and state level have squeezed these appropriations for funding of public colleges and universities. Regardless of these changing priorities at various government levels, the higher education segment exhibited industrial elements explainable by Porter's (1980) Five Forces.

Porter's Models in International Education

Reviewing use of Porter's Five Forces model (1980) and the Diamond model (1990) in the evaluation of competitiveness in the higher education sector yielded many international

studies. Porter's Five Forces model is a leading theoretical approach that substantiates economic forces on the establishment of strategic direction. Porter's Diamond model (1990) is a framework designed to assess national competitiveness but was later adapted to evaluate the competitiveness of economic sectors.

Porter's Diamond model (1990) evaluated both external and internal factors that created unique advantages in a global market. Research studying Canada, Kenya, Australia, South Africa, Vietnam, Norway, China, and Malaysia in the literature point to the value of the models. Stonkiene et al. (2016) provided an analysis layered onto global higher education systems in general. Stonkiene et al. (2016) and Tsiligiris (2018) applied the Diamond model given its approach to determining the competitiveness of national higher education systems. This provided context to the macroeconomic influences on the industry as opposed to the microeconomic conditions highlighted within the Five Forces model as well as the Diamond model.

The various global studies using Porter's Five Forces model involved quite different regional circumstances. Bertheussen (2020) noted that Porter's competitive strategy required a set of activities that deliver value in business models. In Arctic Norway, the Campus Alta understood these sets when embarking upon an online campus to address geographic challenges, and it strategically invested in multiple business models. Do (2019) highlighted the very immature nature of higher education in Vietnam and noted that Porter's Five Forces established competitive strategies to address the reduction of and reliance on the central government in higher education. Awuzie and Emuze (2016) noted that South Africa's Central University competitive advantage was based upon product differentiation. The university made clear choices to compete on differentiation and not through cost leadership as set forth in Porter's Diamond model. Finally, Tsiligiris (2018) noted the models were applicable to the exporting of

higher education across national borders from the United Kingdom to China and Malaysia, confirming their functionality internationally as well.

Pringle et al. (2011), Mathooko and Ogutu (2015), Mahat (2019), and Do (2019) noted the application of Porter's Five Forces had yielded results in the understanding of the higher education industry while pointing to the peculiarities within it. Pringle et al. (2011) noted the unique relationship with the Canadian provincial and federal governments. Mahat (2019) highlighted the innate difference in medical education versus a traditional baccalaureate school. Do (2019) noted the subpar quality of the academic staff that included professors without terminal degrees or those holding doctoral degrees who were trained domestically. Additionally, Mathooko and Ogutu (2015) highlighted the willingness of Kenyan higher education institutions to adopt business-like approaches given environment conditions that created homogeneous program offerings. Each of these findings, although with different conditions for each system, led to a varied strategic response to create a competitive advantage.

While the classic Porter Five Forces model did not indicate the government as a primary factor, Pringle et al. (2011), Mathooko and Ogutu (2015), Mahat (2019) and Do (2019) find that government was a sixth force in higher education. Government had a substantive regulatory influence on higher education and may have even provided beneficial impact on medical education in Australia (Mahat, 2019). Do (2019) found a similar influence by the government, but as an opposing force that benefited education through the reduction of its overall influence on the sector. These international findings indicate beneficial uses of Porter's (1980) Five Forces model domestically.

Linking Institutional Planning to Social Mobility

Higher education institutions require both academic and social capital from prospective students for admission to the institutions. Students with first generational status and/or who have diverse racial and cultural identities had been historically limited in demonstrating this academic and social capital given societal challenges. If higher education mission and vision was about connecting these diverse student sets to higher socioeconomic status within the economic and social system of the US, then higher education institutions must meet the social mobility imperative (Brown & Davis, 2001; Gonzalez et al., 2003; Mocca et.al, 2019; Sandefur et al., 2006;). Linkage of this imperative to strategic planning and associated resource allocation will be critical to institutional viability. If these academic and social capital needs were imparted by the institution to these diverse students with demonstratable social mobility outcomes, a unique strategic positioning may become the direction forward.

With colleges and universities experiencing decreased revenue from student tuition and auxiliary sources due to pandemic closures, there will continue to be a decline in institutional spending on academic and support services for students (Kelchen et al., 2021). This decrease in spending could have a negative impact on completion rates for those students that have the lowest odds of completing degree requirements, most notably first-generation students. Since academic and social systems were critical for student acclimation and success (Nandy, et al., 2021), decreased spending can have negative impacts on student persistence and graduation furthering public skepticism of the value of a college degree (Tretina, 2022). Attaining advanced education credentialing such as associate and baccalaureate degrees had shown consistent return in the form of increase in income and wealth. Younger generations of Americans were voicing concerns that the benefits of higher education do not outweigh the costs (Brevoort, 2021). This

inability for higher education institutions to overcome this perception will not only accelerate the income and wealth gaps within the US but will also heighten the likelihood that the institutions with the most potential to address that inequity will fail.

Synthesis of Findings

In an overview of the competitive landscape of higher education, emphasis on changing demographics, demand for higher education, and accelerating trends because of the COVID pandemic had portrayed an uncertain future. In the evaluation of planning for future sustainability, colleges and universities may need to change focus and better position themselves for continued uncertainly and challenges. A realization of and appreciation for business-centric strategic planning had been identified as necessary for this change of management. Models that determine industrial structure were a prerequisite to understanding microeconomic decisions to position these institutions for success. This pivot for higher education institutions may be critical for the continuance of operations for many colleges and universities that serve vulnerable populations in the US. The need to change how higher education institutions develop and execute strategic planning had a significant impact on both the institutions and those students in these vulnerable populations.

The need for change was apparent given the multitude of ongoing struggles for institutions with non-descript brands, mostly with a regional designation. This opportunity to merge fiscal sustainability with socially and culturally responsive initiatives will lead to more focused institutions that will increase outcomes for institutions and their respective students. Porter (1980) had developed multiple models that evaluate competition, industrial structure, and strategic positioning. One model, Porter's Five Forces (1980), offered executive leadership a method for understanding industrial structure. That model highlighted the opportunities for

strategic positioning that can generate sustained profits even in an educational segment. Porter's framework had historical success in commercial settings as well as educational systems outside the US. While there was little research suggesting usage within the US market, drawing from both domestic industrial segments as well as nationalized international systems provided a foundation for the model's usage in the domestic market post pandemic.

Critique of Previous Methods

This case study sought to improve knowledge of higher education executive leadership on crafting more relevant and effective strategic planning for higher education institutions. This study was grounded in business centric and higher education lenses as provided within the literature review and background for the study. This study extends previous research by adding to the existing body of literature through the analysis of existing institutional planning and development of future focused strategic planning that will more effectively address existing and future concerns for many higher education institutions across the segment.

This literature review showed that previous research of strategic planning in higher education was likely simply internal planning that did not account for market forces. This study sought to provide a viable pathway for institutions to develop genuine strategic planning focused on the sustainability of institutions in an increasingly competitive and challenging industrial segment. This study differentiated itself from others in that its specific focus to the understanding that executive leadership had of these market forces and how these forces are accounted for in the strategic planning. Utilizing a business centric framework by Porter (1980) provided a more effective direction for higher education institutions. The study should produce relevant information for higher education leadership and those that practice within it who are deeply involved with strategic planning and related initiatives. This study provides insights into how

educational leadership can embrace business centric planning to foster long term sustainability alongside their respective board of governance.

Summary

Strategic planning in higher education may not have been historically and culturally aligned with strategic planning in commercial settings. Prior research had not demonstrated the need for the connection of higher education to be viewed as an industrial segment in which corporate tools such as strategic planning would be essential for many institutions to secure their viability amid areas of ongoing concern. The results of this study can assist executive leadership in colleges and universities to provide and craft meaningful and effective planning for their respective institutions post pandemic and beyond. While the primary focus of this work was on the New York metropolitan area of the US with implication for broader US, review of international systems were studied as well to gauge the relevance of Porter's (1980) Five Forces in the US higher education sector. Chapter 2 highlighted the theoretical framework and a review of the existing literature that formed the foundation of this case study research. Chapter 3 describes in full detail the research design, methodology, and collection methods to respond to the research question.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the prior two chapters, the researcher explained the basic research design and research questions, discussed the theoretical framework of this study, and highlighted the specific need for this study through the review of the literature available. This methods chapter (1) defines the study conducted by the researcher (2) discusses the purpose of the study, (3) restates the research questions, (4) highlights the research design, (5) describes the targeted population and the specific participant selection process, (6) highlights the procedures utilized in the conduction of the research, (7) describes the instruments utilized to collect the specific data, and (8) finally discusses the ethical considerations and implications of this study.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this case study was to examine methods, procedures, behaviors, and attitudes that executive leadership in higher education used to design strategic planning. Understanding these processes was an important addition to the body of academic knowledge for executive higher education leadership to craft strategic planning that increased the financial performance of higher education institutions. This topic held significance to both researchers and practitioners alike in both the secondary and postsecondary segments of the education industry. Past practices of strategic planning based upon mission and faculty centric lenses have ignored market driven forces with significant impact. Labor market conditions, changing demographics, consumer behavior and attitudes, return on investment considerations, and outcome performance all threaten the financial viability of higher education institutions.

Research Questions

To better position executive higher education institutional leaders to craft and execute strategic plans that meet sustainable initiatives and support the mission, this research addressed these specific questions:

RQ1: How does higher education executive leadership account for market forces in the development of strategic plans?

RQ2: How did market analysis infuse into the strategic planning process?

RQ3: Does higher education executive leadership believe that market analysis helps to create a more effective strategic plan?

Research Design

This research was a qualitative case study based upon the model presented by Creswell and Creswell (2018). The design explored the creation and execution of institutional-wide strategic planning by examining one or more institutions as an example. This analysis provided a depth of analysis of the strategic planning process.

To provide this depth of analysis, multiple data collection methods included:

1. Document review of institutional strategic plans.

2. Survey instrument sent to executive higher education leadership.

3. Open-ended, but semi-structured interviews with executive higher education leadership.

4. Researcher notes and journal entries collected throughout the research study.

Researcher notes and journal entries were included in this data analysis process both as a method to support the researcher's understanding of the subject's interviews as well as an

acknowledgement that the researcher has biases. These notes and journal entries allowed for a deeper experience of the case study locales while permitting the researcher the opportunity to be transparent with his attitudes, values, and biases that shape the overall account of the research study.

Researcher Role

The researcher's professional experience had been shaped by various roles in his career. The researcher had been held in enrollment management functions at three different institutions. Each institution had a differing mission and strategy while also differing in governance structure and classification. The researcher had completed academic degrees in business disciplines and had considerable interest in the application of learned business principles into higher educational settings. Employing the use of journal accounts and associated reflections assisted in awareness of unconscious bias to maintain integrity and objectivity.

Gathering data as a researcher entails an ethical duty which must be considered prior to accessing the data and people that provided that access (Stake, 1995). Ethics in qualitative research centered on the participant's protection within this case study. This study interviewed human participants to collect data on the roles of strategic planning and the associated perceptions related to successful usage of market forces in that planning. These human subjects were at no greater than minimal risk and informed consent forms were provided.

Participants had multiple opportunities to cease being a part of the study up to the data analysis phase. Confidentiality was secured to allow for comfort in the full sharing of the participant's perceptions of the strategic planning process. Participants received a pseudonym for concealment of identity. Electronic data files were stored on the William Paterson University password protected network storage dissertation drive. Hardware devices were locked and

protected by passwords. Data will be destroyed after the required number of years per IRB protocol.

Target Population and Sampling

Population

The population from which the sample was drawn are executive leadership at higher education institutions in the New York metropolitan area of the United States. These leaders had direct responsibilities in the planning and execution of institutional strategics plans. While the focus was on executive leaders, leadership roles in the planning and execution of the strategic plan could have been identified and interviewed as part of the population.

Sample

The study utilized a convenience sample. Further, the use of purpose sampling was utilized to identify one or more higher educational institutions or state systems that posted strategic planning processes on respective websites. Creswell and Creswell (2018) described purposeful sampling as a method that allows a researcher to choose institutions and specific individuals to create understanding of the research problem, the research question, and fundamental experiences in the study.

Participants were selected by purpose sampling and snowball sampling. Participants were selected based upon organizational roles, participation in strategic planning processes, and through discovery during the interviews of other participants. Qualitative research via case study method did not necessitate a minimum sample size. The selection of participants and documentation were collected to the point of data saturation which is the point where additional information was redundant and provided no new insights (Bogdan & Biklin, 2007). More recently, Creswell and Creswell (2018) indicated that about four to five participants were

reasonable sample size. The participants had association with the institution or system and had

direct awareness of the strategic planning process. The central focus of study was on executive

leadership in higher education institutions, primarily those of President, Provost, and Vice

President for Strategy, that were the final decision makers within the organization. Other layers

of leadership inclusive of middle leadership and frontline constituents could have had critical

lenses about the development and execution of the approved strategic plans. Leadership may be

more broadly extended to other critical constituents, both external and internal, and inclusive of

faculty, staff, and students if a direct role in the planning process was confirmed. All participants

had perspectives related to either successful or unsuccessful aspects of the planning process as

well as the specific elements utilized to develop strategic plans.

Participant Characteristics

All participants held the position title of President. The race and ethnicity of three

participants were White and one was African American as designated by federally defined

categories within the US Census. The participants represented leadership at private institutions

from states across the New York Metropolitan area of the US. The Carnegie Classification of

these institutions included Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs, Master's Colleges

& Universities: Medium Programs, and Baccalaureate Colleges: Arts & Sciences Focus.

Procedure

Participant Recruitment and Selection Tactics

Permission was first obtained from the host institution to conduct the case study. This

included the ability to contact leadership employees via a recruitment email and online meeting

software, the sending of a survey instrument, and the conducting of an interview. Once approved,

the recruitment of the participants began. The researcher began to solicit college and university

presidents in the New York metropolitan area with which there was familiarity. The researcher then investigated and reviewed the publicly available strategic planning documentation and associated processes at the institutions. The strategic plan web pages provided a listing of institutional employee names and leadership titles. After finding contact avenues the selected individuals were contacted by email with an invitation to participate in the case study along with an informed consent form.

Willing participants were asked to complete an initial survey and then a subsequent interview. The interview was based on a set of questions about their role in strategic planning and if the use of market forces was taken into consideration when these plans were created. That interview guide contained three distinct sets of questions that included orientating, main, and follow up questions (Roberts, 2020). If other leadership employees were discussed during the initial participant interviews, these individuals were subsequently invited to participate in the case study. The researcher posed the direct question of whether the initial participants knew of higher education executive leaders from other institutions that might be recruited to complete the survey and interview.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Participants were included if their roles were at an executive level and had direct contributory development of strategic planning. Those participants that had direct roles in strategic planning development, but without the above titles, could also have been included but were not identified in this study. Excluded from the study were university employees without direct contributory roles in the creation of higher education institutional strategic plans.

Participant Protections

Participants were sent a consent form along with the initial invitation. If requested, the participants were sent a copy of the survey and interview expectations and protocols. Acknowledgement was made of the fact that it was possible for participants to divulge information that may be deemed damaging to their career or to the institution at large. There was also a possibility that the use of snowball sampling might elevate concern that the participants would feel pressure by those with influence to partake in the survey.

The transcript of the entire interview was made available for participants to review. Participants had the opportunity to respond to the researcher's interpretation of the respective survey, the interview, the associated transcript, and the formal researcher account. The participants also had the option to provide adjusted wording and/or a different interpretation of the participant's response. Participants were able to fully withdraw from the case study up to and including in the data analysis phase for any reason including concerns with the researcher's account.

Expert Contribution to Interview Question Set

The set of questions in the survey and interview posed to the participants were reviewed by higher education institutional staff with expertise in strategic planning. These individuals had been part of this strategic planning protocol in an executive management capacity and in related processes to develop the planning artifacts. The members of this panel had also attained at least a master's level degree as well as had direct experience in multiple strategic planning initiatives.

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Data Collection

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Once Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval was granted from the host institution, the collection of the data began with the recruitment of participants through sending email

invitations. Participant eligibility was based on the conditions listed in the prior section entitled Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria. The formal review of documentation via the various university strategic planning websites was continual. The websites provided a view of the strategic planning documents and any accompanying strategic planning committee procedures utilized to produce the final strategic planning artifacts. The researcher maintained a journal while collecting the information from websites.

The researcher conducted the interviews as open-ended, yet partially structured interviews with leadership on the campuses that responded to the recruiting email. If requested, participants were provided with the protocol for the interview including the question set. The consent forms were retained and reviewed for accuracy before the interview commenced. Interviews were guided by the question set that included orientating questions, prompts to assist in probing further into responses, and open-ended opportunities for the participants to address any additional thoughts (Roberts, 2020). The interviews were recorded via Zoom and included video and audio recording. Phone interviews were available to participants but were not requested. These recordings were transcribed by the researcher after each interview and were given to the participants to review for general accuracy and the opportunity to comment on and adjust the researcher's interpretations.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The confidentiality of the participants was maintained throughout data collection and processing including during the actual collection, transmission, and storage of that data. Protection procedures included the use of a pseudonym for each of the survey and interview participants. Any observed attitude and behavior was not attributed to individuals or institutions. The storage of the survey and interview data was on the William Paterson University password

protected network storage dissertation drive. Physical technology devices and any researcher notes were stored in a secure location when not in use in accordance with IRB protocol. Data on all platforms will be erased after the necessary period of record disposition, which is seven years.

Data Analysis

The survey instrument was provided as a method to capture descriptive statistics from the participants. The results of the survey were subsequently presented to the participants. Interviews were video and audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher post interview. Creswell and Creswell (2018) featured the use of coding in qualitative research with three categories of codes. These included expected codes, surprising codes, and codes of unusual or conceptual interest. These codes developed from the interviewer's interface with the data collected and were not preconceived prior to its collection. These codes served as a tool in defining, comparing, and contrasting data that were collected. This coding process was repetitive, dynamic, and looping. The data analyzed included the transcripts of the executive leadership interviews and strategic planning documents and websites.

The process of coding began with a precoding phase that circled, bolded, underlined, and highlighted significant parts of the interview or documents as determined by the interviewer (Saldana, 2016). Next, the data were coded using two or more of the initial codes that are well-suited for the study. The use of a color-coding system was employed as a visual aid in organizing data into discrete categories. These categories were inputted into an Excel spreadsheet to record the comparisons among the data. Finally, the data were categorized into themes. These themes served to provide confirmation on the findings within the interviews and documents. The researcher continually referred to the interview questions and the responses of the participants to ensure themes were compared across interviews and originated from the same question. Use of

notes throughout the coding process helped to ground the interviewer to make him aware of his decisions during the data analysis process.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommended the practice of creating a description of the case studies, combining the data into categories, and finally breaking down these categories into themes. This case study process provided a generalization about the cases and a capability for comparison of these themes across the individual cases. After the precoding and coding, the codes were placed into categories and then into the major thematic sections. The code was worked manually rather than using proprietary software to organize the data.

To confirm the findings of the case study, the researcher used a multitude of strategies. These included sharing the results with the participants, solicitation of feedback from others in the profession, articulation of biases held by the interviewer, and demonstration that the findings will be collected from a multitude of sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Further, the sharing of the results with the participants included a draft of the discussion to permit feedback on the accuracy of the data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were obligatory for the researcher to consider during data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The primary concern was upholding the rights of the interview participants. This case study included the use of human subjects to gather information about strategic planning processes, the use of market forces in that plan development, and personal perspectives on the performance of the subsequently crafted plans. These participants were not subjected to a risk greater than a minimal threshold. Informed consent forms were provided, and the participants had multiple points in time to withdraw from the study.

The confidentiality of the participants was protected throughout the duration of this case study to generate a safe environment for contributing personal views related to strategic planning process and the consideration of market forces. These participants were identified by pseudonyms and all behavioral feedback from these interviewees were not attributed to that individual or institution. Electronic data files were stored on the William Paterson University password protected network storage dissertation drive. Hardware devices were locked and protected by passwords. All data will be destroyed after seven years in accordance with IRB disposition protocol.

Researcher Bias

The researcher's views had been impacted by lived experiences unique to the researcher. Direct experience in the higher education field for many years and the attainment of degrees in business and education disciplines had shaped and colored the researcher's lens. To keep the researcher aware of these biases, the use of journaling was employed throughout the case study. These notes also allowed the researcher to expose other biases and maintain objectivity (Creswell & Creswell. 2018).

Summary

This case study involved qualitative research methods that described the behaviors, attitudes, and associated processes for strategic planning initiatives at higher education institutions. The findings of this study had implications for leadership at higher education institutions to craft more meaningful and productive strategic plans that consider market forces in unison with internal mission. Chapter 3 described in full detail the research design, methodology, and collection methods to respond to the research questions. In Chapter 4, the researcher presents the data collected and associated data analysis conducted.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

The intent of this research study was to describe consideration, inclusion, and significance of market forces in the development of strategic planning at higher education institutions. This chapter reports on the data collected throughout the study and presents the analysis of that data collection. The chapter begins with the description of the sample that was studied. Next, the methods utilized in the analysis of the data are discussed further. The results of the analysis are presented with a summary of the findings highlighted. Finally, these results will be discussed in detail with interpretation and implications of the data in Chapter 5.

Prior to presenting the findings, a review of the researcher's role within the study was important to emphasize again. The researcher's views had been impacted by lived experiences unique to the researcher. Many years of direct experience in the higher education field and the attainment of degrees in business and education disciplines had shaped and colored the researcher's lens. To keep the researcher aware of these biases, the use of journaling was employed throughout the case study. These notes allowed the researcher to expose other biases and maintain objectivity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These notes kept implicit bias in the forefront to maintain objectivity. This was critically important as the research questions add to the body of knowledge, but also to the professional development attained by the research. Impartiality will remain a crucial part of the present and future professional and academic work of the researcher.

Description of the Sample

Participants in this study were selected via the use of purposeful and snowball sampling that yielded both private and public institutions. A total of nine individuals were solicited for

participation. Four participants that responded were from private institutions of higher education within the metropolitan New York area. All four participants held the position of President at their respective private institutions. One additional participant from a public institution responded but was not sent the survey or interviewed given that the earlier respondents were from private institutions. Four others did not respond to the solicitation email, two each from public institutions and private institutions of higher education, respectively. Given that four of the participants were from private institutions, the one public institution participant was excluded. This exclusion meant that the survey and interview emails were not sent, and that participant from the public institution was not included on grounds that thematic patterns would not be observed with the inclusion of only one public institution. A protocol modification was submitted to the William Paterson University Institutional Research Board with that rationale and the exclusion was approved by the Board. The institutions of higher education selected as participants exhibited a similar incorporation as private, not-for-profit institutions.

Research Methodology

Creswell and Creswell (2018) featured the use of coding in qualitative research with three categories of codes. These included expected codes, surprising codes, and codes of unusual or conceptual interest. These codes developed from the researcher's interface with the data collected and were not preconceived prior to its collection. These codes served as a tool in defining, comparing, and contrasting data that were collected. This coding process was repetitive, dynamic, and looping. The data were analyzed and included the transcripts of the executive leadership interviews, survey instrument, and strategic planning documents and websites.

The researcher transcribed the video recording of the interviews along with the aggregation of the descriptive statistics in the survey instrument. The researcher then began a process of precoding that included circling, bolding, underlining, and highlighting significant parts of the interview and documents as examined (Saldana, 2016). Next, the data were coded by using two or more of the initial codes that were well-suited for the study. The use of a color-coding system as a visual aid in organizing data into discrete categories was utilized. These categories were input into an Excel spreadsheet to record the comparisons among the data. Finally, the data were categorized into themes. These themes served to confirm findings within the survey, interviews, and documents reviewed. The researcher continually referred to the interview questions and the responses of the participants to ensure the themes were compared across interviews that originated from the same question. Use of notes throughout the coding process helped to ground the interviewer to maintain awareness of decisions made during the data analysis process.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommended the practice of creating a description of the case studies, combining the data into categories, and finally breaking down these categories into themes. This case study process provided a generalization about the cases and a capability for comparison of these themes across the individual cases. After the precoding and coding, the codes were placed into categories and then into the major thematic sections. The coding was worked manually using an Excel worksheet rather than using proprietary software to organize the data.

To confirm the findings of the case study, the researcher used a multitude of strategies. These included the sharing of results with the participants, solicitation of feedback from others in the profession, articulation of biases held by the interviewer through notes taken during the start

and finish of the coding process, and demonstration that the findings have been collected from a multitude of sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Lastly, the sharing of the results with the participants included a draft of the findings to permit frequent feedback on the accuracy of the data collected and analyzed.

Research Questions

To better position higher education institutional executive leaders to craft and execute strategic plans that meet sustainable initiatives and support the mission, this research addressed these specific questions:

RQ1: How does higher education executive leadership account for market forces in the development of strategic plans?

RQ2: How did market analysis infuse into the strategic planning process?

RQ3: Does higher education executive leadership believe that market analysis helps to create a more effective strategic plan?

Presentation of the Data

Four university presidents leading private institutions in the metropolitan New York area completed a fifteen-question survey instrument before participating in an interview. The survey's intent was to capture data on the development and design of strategic planning in higher education institutions prior to the full interview. Additionally, the survey was administered prior to the interview to introduce the market forces defined by Porter (1980) that would be explored in that interview. The preferred participant was a university president but could have been a primary designee such as the Chief of Staff, Provost, or Vice President for Strategic Planning. All participants in this study were university Presidents, and all completed both portions of the study that included the survey and interview. The survey did not capture demographic

information. The interview revealed that all were male. Three of the four presidents were White, and one was African American. Three were active in the President role and one was recently retired but had served as President during the creation of the recently completed strategic plan.

Survey Results

Overview

The survey was designed to capture more details on the level of participant involvement, the strategic plan development process, the strategic plan final design, whether market forces were considered and what degree of importance these forces played on the three-point Likert scale, whether campus constituents were aware of these forces during the development of the strategic plan, the review period and communication timeframe of the strategic plan progress and outcomes, and by what measures were the success or failure of the strategic plan evaluated. The survey is attached in Appendix A.

Presidential Participation in Strategic Planning

All four presidents indicated active participation in the design of strategic plans during their tenures. All four also indicated active engagement in the actual creation of the strategic plans. Two of the four indicated strategic plan outcomes were linked to self-study accreditation requirements.

Constituent Participation in Strategic Planning

All four participants indicated that executive leadership, academic leadership, faculty, and managerial staff were selected to be part of strategic planning committee work. Three of the four indicated that the Board of Trustees/Directors were represented on these committees. Two of four highlighted the importance of support staff participation as well as undergraduate and

graduate students serving in this capacity. One university president indicated alumni, corporate, and community constituents also had a seat on these committees.

Method of Assignment and Use of Modeling for Strategic Planning

Most of the respective constituencies were appointed by the President of the institution, but in some cases an elective or self-nomination process was utilized. Only one President indicated that strategic plans were developed following specific modeling. That one specific model was the entitled Strategic Compass and created by Jeff Buller.

Relative Importance of Constituent Contribution to Strategic Planning

When considering the importance of factors in the creation of strategic planning, the goals expressed by the President with input from executive leadership were identified as very important. Board of Trustees/Directors goals were identified as either important or very important. Input from faculty and staff was identified as important to half of the university Presidents. Input from undergraduate and graduate students was described as important to the process but not very important. Alumni involvement was split between important and not important. Corporate and community constituents were most likely to be indicated as not important in strategic plan creation. One university president indicated community constituents to be very important.

Market Force Importance in Strategic Planning

Market forces defined by Porter (1980) were: 1) threats of new entrants, 2) bargaining power of suppliers, 3) bargaining power of buyers, 4) threats of substitute products, and 5) respective rivalry among the competitors. With respect to market forces, the university presidents indicated that the rivalry among institutions in the New York metropolitan area was either important or very important. The potential for new entrants into this market was not considered

important for three of the four university presidents. The negotiating power of suppliers was not important for two of the four university Presidents, but two had indicated this force as important. The negotiating power of consumers (students) was important for three of the four university Presidents, while one expressed it to be very important. The last market force for consideration, the threat of substitute products, was not consistent in one way or another. Two Presidents stated it was not considered in the creation of the plans while two indicated this threat was an important consideration.

Market Force Awareness in Strategic Planning

There were mixed results about the awareness and advisement of these forces for strategic planning committees as well. Members of strategic planning committees were aware to very aware of the rivalry among institutions in the New York metropolitan area. The potential of new entrants was evidenced with awareness and advisement. Negotiating power of suppliers (faculty) and the negotiating power of customers (students) were mixed in awareness versus nonawareness. This mixed response was also evident with the threat of substitute products with one university President listing these as very important and the others listing these with no awareness of or advisement for the strategic planning committees.

Direct Measurement of Market Forces

With respect to directly addressing the five market forces, the four presidents indicated that their strategic plans responded directly or responded directly and measurably to competition. Responding to the potential for new entrants was indicated by three of the four Presidents. The negotiating power of suppliers (faculty) was not indicated as being directly addressed in the strategic plan for two of the four Presidents. The negotiating power of customers (students) was present for three of the four Presidents with two notably indicating an elevated direct and

measurable approach to that force. The threat of substitute products was indicated as responding to and addressing this force within the strategic plans with two of the four Presidents. Notably, two Presidents indicated that this force was not important.

Strategic Plan Timeframe and Notification to Constituents

The period of the strategic plans produced at the institutions led by three of the four Presidents was three to five years with the other President indicating a one to three-year term. All presidents indicated these strategic plans required regular review and revision. The periods of review and revision varied with two indicating annual revision, one indicated quarterly revision, and one indicting ongoing revision with updates as needed. The Presidents indicated that the respective strategic plans required regular updates to the campus communities related to the progress toward goal and objective attainment. These types of notifications were done annually by the institutions.

Use of Key Performance Indicators in Strategic Planning

Finally, there were performance indicators embedded within the respective strategic plans, with three of four indicating usage of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and one indicating usage of Objective Key Results (OKR) within the Strategic Compass Model.

Interview Results

The four university Presidents leading private institutions in the metropolitan New York area completed a forty-five-to-sixty-minute interview. The interview was guided by a set of thirteen questions. This question set was used to capture a comprehensive understanding of the creation factors and market force considerations that craft and execute strategic plans, meet sustainable initiatives, support the institutional mission, and provide consistency across participant responses. The interviews were intended to expand upon the initial survey that was

designed to capture the level of participant involvement, the strategic plan development process, the strategic plan final design, whether market forces were considered and what degree of importance these forces played on the three-point Likert scale, whether campus constituents were aware of these forces during the development of the strategic plan, the review period and communication timeframe of the strategic plan progress and outcomes, and by what measures the success or failure of the strategic plan were evaluated.

Evidence to support the three research questions governing this study were exhibited during the interviews with these four university Presidents. Through the analysis of these interviews, the synthesis of the information captured the essence of executive leadership consideration of market forces when developing strategic planning processes at private institutions in the New York metropolitan area. This section identified the themes that address the respective research questions. The format was sequential beginning with research question one and ending with research question three. The respective descriptions highlighted by the participants were direct excerpts from the interviews.

Summary of Findings - Research Question 1: How does higher education executive leadership account for market forces in the development of strategic plans?

Overview

The presidents focused on identity, structural considerations, and goal development in the production of strategic planning. These internal components of strategic planning were the first themes identified. These identity, structural considerations, and goal developments were then connected to the second theme, awareness of the external environment.

Themes and Supporting Evidence

The first theme focused on the impetus for the development of the plans and how the process worked in concept. This impetus for strategic planning was synthesized by the presidents as a method to provide structures and establish an identity for the respective institutions. Strategic planning was defined as forward facing but grounded in the mission of the institutions from which the strategic plan provided future direction.

Participant 2 illustrated this identity development:

> "So, the impetus is really to try and set a guidepost for a path forward that creates a common purpose, common language, common strategy, and common goals…"

Participant 1 complemented the comments from Participant 2:

> "The impetus is it tells you what the shape of the fish is. Are you a flounder, or are you a swordfish? That goes to the question of what the ultimate mission of the institution is...the strategic plan is, to me, the manifestation."

Participant 4 followed the other Presidents' thoughts while connecting the impetus to the needs of a major constituent:

> "Well, in our terms, it's really the impetus for the strategic plan is to…just establish a framework in which to determine academic programs, student life, and athletic programs designed to meet the needs of our students… How do we best, I guess, rephrase it. Guiding principles: how do we best meet the needs of our students now and in the future? So that's really the impetus."

The continuation of the first theme focused on the impetus for strategic planning was the development of associated goals and objectives. The Presidents indicated general agreement on a structural component with the formation of committees that represented many constituent voices

as part of this process. As found through the interviews, these voices were inclusive of leadership personnel, rank and file staff, and both external and internal representation. Goal setting also was traced back to university mission, with additional consideration for prior plans, market forces, and accreditation needs.

Participant 2 captured this goal setting:

"So, when done well, it should be an alignment of reviewing the institution's prior plans, its history, its mission, looking at the progress that's been made, and then assessing the current and future landscape of the institution, its resources, its path forward and in some cases, some of the market forces that are critical to determining needs to pivot, change direction, adopt new thinking, adopt new strategies and in some cases in the current crisis environment and higher education to quickly pivot and adapt in such a way to build a sustainable path forward for the institution and to set it on a path towards aligning with the changing market forces that we know are very, very clear and in front of us in this industry."

Participant 4 concurred with Participant 2 with respect to goals and objectives building the bones of the plan:

"So, I'll have a strategic planning committee meeting next week with our Board, we are going to be guided by three overarching principles. And it's really what are the facilities needed? And that includes the physical facilities and the technological facilities for different modalities of learning. So, whether it's in person, hybrid or online. Second question is then what's the right structure at the university to meet those needs, and that includes what's the appropriate academic

programs? What are the needs of student life? What are the needs of athletics, which is a large driver in terms of the number of students we do bring in. And then the third major question will be…how we do this in a fiscally responsible and sustainable way."

The development of goals and objectives were central to the body of the strategic plan, but other factors were found to impact the strategic plan artifact. The influence of accreditation agencies was critical to the development of strategic plans. Participant 3 stated this clearly: "we have the Middle States visit coming up…and…that's one of the things that is really guiding us on…so we have what we call strategic plan objectives."

While the participants spoke about the internal dynamics of a strategic planning process, the awareness of external phenomena was evident in the participant responses. This manifested as the second theme. Participant 1 spoke directly to the external environment with specific reference to the term "marketplace":

"External is the obvious, which is the marketplace. The region that you're operating in. And, as well as, you know, your alumni, but you can't be beholden. And so, what you see is an emphasis, in my view, long term incorrectly, but nevertheless short term on economics and the relationship of the higher ed institution to the economics of the state... So, I think the external marketplace is, you know it's very important…It's just the other side of that coin, you know, who your students are is a microcosm of the external market. I mean, you know, if it were up to the faculty, maybe this is unfair, and I don't obviously know all the faculty, but you know, they would all be preparing kids to go off and get Ph.D.'s and living in an isolated world and they don't really understand."

Participant 3 echoed some of the elements that participant 1 spoke about:

> "So, the answer is yes,…probably the biggest underlying circumstance or kind of climate, if you will, is the current climate facing higher education. I think the plan largely is very steeped and aligned in the realities facing higher education, and it's [a] failing business model right now. And so, in, many respects, you've seeing this is almost one of these, you know, kind of transformational business times that you would see that's befallen many different industries."

There was not consistent acknowledgement of the awareness. Participant 4 had an honest evaluation on the lack of accounting for market forces:

> "We did some analysis of the larger environmental factors that could influence the plan. But in our initial development of the plan, I would say we had a miscalculation of sorts and I'll give you the specific example. We thought we would best be served by growing undergraduate programs. And we really didn't take into account…the demographics that we're going to be occurring as we developed the plan in 2018, the demographic cliff was seven or eight years ago, eight years down the line. So, we weren't looking quite that far in advance. But what we found is that we had better opportunities in developing graduate programs or post Baccalaureate programs and we had never considered post baccalaureate programs, but an opportunity presented itself to us to develop and accelerated BSN program."

Conclusion

Four university Presidents acknowledged that market forces were considered in the development of strategic plans both internally and externally. The presidents focused internally

on identity, structural considerations, and goal development in the production of strategic planning. These internal components of strategic planning then connected to the Presidents' scanning of the external environment to account for the market forces most salient to their respective institutions.

Summary of Findings - Research Question 2: How did market analysis infuse into the strategic planning process?

Overview

Infusion of market forces was found to be essential to the execution of the strategic plans. The Presidents highlighted the importance they played in that infusion. Similar to how the presidents accounted for market forces in the development of strategic plans, they also played a role in the infusion of the market forces into the plans. That role was one that promoted transparency with an appreciation for a participatory process. Their focus was both internally and externally driven.

Themes and Supporting Evidence

The first theme was a cohesive bond between the President's vision and the actual process that implemented the planning. This first theme of a top-down internally driven process was evident among the Presidents. The second theme was the transparent and participatory nature of the process. Throughout the strategic planning process the awareness of these market forces were evident. The bargaining power of the consumer (student) was the force most widely acknowledged, but others were crucial as well.

Participant 3 had indicated the theme of cohesion between the strategic planning process and the infusion of market forces:

"I think there needs to be clarity with regard to the purpose, with regard to the path, with regard to the destination of, of what you're doing. I think there needs to be also a clarity of messaging around that. I think there needs to be a certain simplicity to it as well. I think far too often strategic plans, particularly in higher education, get into the weeds around a lot of things, making it kind of a laundry list. I think there needs to be a certain simplicity to it that very much aligns with the mission of the institution and the market forces that we currently face and how we're addressing them head on to build for a sustainable path forward. And I think there then needs to be from my role a constant theme of messaging around it. It needs to be the thing that we speak of. It needs to be kind of the guidepost and the North Star of everything we say and do. So, if it we believe in, you know these five things as our path to success, I need to be resonating that in our community, whether I'm speaking to students, to faculty, to staff, to external stakeholders, to talk about this is who we are, this is where we're going, and this is our strategy to get there. So, I think a lot of it is my role as the kind of the assessor of the landscape, the builder of community and consensus. And then the messenger of it to the external world."

Participant 4 concurred with this cohesion and the role the president played in this process:

"I think a general understanding of the objectives. A certain extent of buy in but we've also structured our institutional assessment around the goals of the strategic plan. So, when my director of assessment reaches out to individual units, they're asked which element of the strategic compass you are working on this year and…

identify policies or practices to further the compass. We've tried to include it in

our general assessment process so that our staff and employees are aware of the

goals on how their unit can contribute to, you know, sometimes specific goals of

the strategic compass you know. So, the financial side may not have anything to

do with student success or academics, but in terms of business operations, they

can help contribute to a more efficient unit as they're focusing on…reducing

expenses or…diversifying revenues in some way."

While market forces were considered, not all the market forces as defined by Porter

(1980) were equally considered. Participant 3 alludes to the disconnect that exists for the faculty

in terms on what the academy would prefer to teach and research as opposed to what the student

as a customer would be willing for enroll and pay for with respect to the teaching and research.

The participants also highlighted the awareness of other economic and social events that

occurred outside of the institution, with those internal factors contributing to strategy

development at their respective institution.

Participant 2 had articulated a multitude of factors that were considered:

"I think we've seen obviously the pandemic being one of the sort of, I would say

the most drastic, because it changed so much about everything from the strategies

around, you know, students and their emotional and mental well-being, to the

expectations of work from home, work remote flexibility, to the need for students

to adapt into an online first environment that they're now more comfortable with

and maybe seeking out in their educational process to many individuals who just

frankly disappeared from the education system during that time."

Participant 2 continued with other external factors that became part of the strategic plan process at his institution:

> "I would say there are several others, amongst them would probably be
>
> economics, in general, with regard to again what I was sort of addressed before,
>
> which is the reality of the cost justification of higher education, right. Is the
>
> earning potential with immediacy so different that it makes spending fifty
>
> thousand, hundred thousand or more justifiable? The other thing I think that's
>
> significant are things like, you know, the gig economy and other sorts of things
>
> where people are earning in a way that allows them to be much more
>
> entrepreneurial in their mindset where they don't see that the need for a
>
> formalized education may be the case."

Participant 3 added an angle based upon vocational aspects of higher education and how that has changed over time:

> We've become very vocational…and the research shows [if] you go to college
>
> you'll generate over $1,000,000 more on average over your lifetime. And
>
> so…higher education has not been good at countering some of those arguments.
>
> …there's an argument that…higher education is just a liberal bastion. You go
>
> there, you're going to be brainwashed. …it's a waste of your money. It's a waste of
>
> time and it's important for higher education to do that because enrollments are
>
> going down. And that's one of the reasons I think…enrollments are going down.
>
> One is the kind of eroding of the middle class and the other is this political
>
> campaign against college."

Finally, participant 4 highlighted governmental regulation role in the consideration:

"So, you can look at government policy and how does that influence an

institution? And one of the areas that we did not anticipate in 2018 was

the…policies with the administration to promote free community college.... then

you can factor in federal policies, you know, whether it's loan forgiveness or it's

the change in accrediting models and how the accrediting agencies start to require

more financial disclosure. …those sorts of things we have to deal with,

government regulation that didn't exist in the past and then that affects operations,

and you've got to allocate resources for somebody to do these things. I think it for

all of us in the industry starts to shorten our time frame with regard to these types

of plans. … traditionally it was always what's a five-year plan and can we even

guess what's going to happen in ten years. Now beyond three years, who knows

what's going to happen?"

While the external foci centered around the economics and the social aspects of

the phenomena, the intersection of accreditation agencies was once again emphasized.

Participant 3 highlighted the importance of accreditation agencies in this external environment,

"I would say externally…Middle States…is one that really makes this essential…if you want to

pass, if you want to maintain your accreditation…internally it depends a lot on the President."

The degree of market force consideration was varied among the presidents, with most

focused on the bargaining power of customers, notably students at higher education institutions.

Participant 4 highlighted that sentiment:

"Yeah, of those we have probably focused most on the student need component.

And an industry need for…the potential workforce…we have not done a good job

at…looking at competitors, we've not necessarily done a good job of looking at

alternatives that are being offered and…starting to be a real threat. Yeah, we're starting to look now at that faculty strength. …through the academic program mix and where are we strong…where do we have too many resources? You know, do we have too many English faculty? So, we're doing that analysis now in that regard. But I would say the overriding consideration is…what are the student's needs?...And it comes back to that guiding principle. I said, how do we best serve our students now and in the future and we do have models where we work with industry to help us develop a curriculum to meet the needs of industry and our students…."

Participant 1 concurred with a primary market force focus on the student:

"Yes. But in the most relevant area. I think it would be hard pressed to design a strategic plan, that has a mission, that carried out a mission where you were heavily dependent on an area of discipline, that…it is very hard to find…"

A broader view was stated by Participant 2 that market forces were considered in the development of their institution's strategic plan:

"So, I would say considers all five in some form. The competitor landscape is an obvious one because the reality is as a regional private institution, we whether we think of ourselves or not in direct competition...So that goes probably hand in hand as well with the student facet because there's a lot of the things that we need to provide. Some of them are educational, but I would honestly say that very little is an educational differentiator, meaning that a student is likely not going to select us and not a competitor because we have program X. There's a lot of these facets of competition from those that weren't frankly in play a number of years ago,

particularly when you're talking about things like credentialing without a degree or other facets. And then, of course, the fifth one you mentioned, which is the competitor space of things like no college or other alternatives beyond just considering this as a viable entity. This is part of the critical nature of us building a strategic plan that looks at the non-traditional student in a non-traditional way."

Participant 3 added context that supported the other three Presidents:

"So, the innovative executive outside of the traditional education is really where we're spending a lot of the time on to really counter some of the competitive forces. We're very, very customer focused. I mean one of the things I think higher education has historically not been as customer focused as it could be…so one of the other things that we're betting a lot on is what we call the working BA."

For the participants, market forces were considered and infused into strategic planning to varied degrees. The process itself manifested as top-down. The respective institutions developed and implemented this strategic planning process in a variety of methods but shared in their conversations that the process must be driven from the President to ensure a palatable plan that can be accepted and executed by that President. While the process was described as a top-down theme, it was also participatory and transparent among campus constituencies that added the substance to the planning documents.

Participant 3 highlighted the role of the President in the strategic planning process.

"…I mean, it really has to be driven from the top, both in doing the plan, but also operationalizing the plan. But I would say, and I've seen some Presidents that are great at doing the plan, but really don't operationalize the plan and it really has to start in this office, in the President's office."

Participant 1 highlighted the need for transparency and contribution:

> "You have to do it in a way that is open and participatory and at the end of the day people, as is typical in a higher ed place, know they've been heard. And if… their suggestion or focus didn't make it into the final cut, they understand why. So that you have an institution that has buy in, buy in, you don't want to come out with a strategic plan that's just a piece of wallpaper."

Participant 3 concurred with Participant 1:

> "Well, one, you know, we need to have regular meetings, so we need to make sure there are regular meetings in each one of the ten areas. So…those meetings aren't just to twiddle your thumb. What are we…what are our plans to achieve the objectives? So…it's not just about the plan, but the plan has allowed us to have cross communication around various things. If we're creating a financially viable university, we need to talk…with the fundraising group…enhance external relations, financial support. So, in addition to having the various group meetings, there needs to be joint meetings of some of the cross will be aligned strategic planning objectives."

Conclusion

Market forces infused into the planning and execution stemmed mostly from an awareness and appreciation for the bargaining power of consumers (students). To a smaller extent, forces outside of Porter's (1980) definitions, such as accreditation agencies and government agencies were considered by the Presidents. The Presidents highlighted the importance they professionally played in that infusion. Like how the presidents accounted for market forces in the development of strategic plans, they also played a role in the infusion of the

market forces into the plans. Their leadership substantiated that importance. Their role furthered the promotion of transparency with an explicit appreciation for a participatory process. Their focus was both internally and externally driven.

Summary of Findings - Research Question 3: Does higher education executive leadership believe that market analysis helps to create a more effective strategic plan?

Overview

The Presidents suggested that current strategic planning was limited in effectiveness and will need to fundamentally adjust to meet institutional financial viability. Additionally, they suggested that the lack of comprehensive market force inclusion will limit the effectiveness of the planning as well as the financial viability of their institutions as well as the industry.

Themes and Supporting Evidence

The first theme was the general appreciation for the importance of market forces for sustainability by university Presidents at private institutions in the New York metropolitan area. The second was the execution of the planning must have to be effective. The third theme was continuation of the importance the President played in the creation, development, and execution of strategic planning.

Participant 4 suggested that failure to account for market forces will simply lead to institutional failure:

> "…I will say that if you are not sensitive to market forces in your strategic plan, it will fail. I'll be that bold and saying that. That higher ed has been insensitive to market forces and in many ways and is struggling now because of that. I would also add that I believe that higher education needs to play a bigger role in

influencing society as a whole rather than…I think higher education has historically been too insular."

Participant 2 suggested the same:

"..I do think that the days of strategic planning being that defined process in a lot of these sort of best practices documents and elsewhere are written at a time that no longer exists for most institutions. And so, the thing I think that will be interesting that I don't have an answer to, that I don't think anybody does right now will be what plays out over time, right? How does this become kind of the phased new normal of higher education with regard to not having the luxuries we've always had of moving very slowly and very deliberately, and in some cases not moving at all. And being OK with that because the market never really shook us up to a point where we didn't have to be. And I just think that those days are long gone, and it'll be interesting to see how that iteration of normalcy moves forward with the changing times and the continued crisis that we find ourselves in."

These Presidents played an active role in the consideration and infusion of market forces into the strategic planning process and artifacts. They also expressed concern over the development of strategic measures and the actual effectiveness of these plans.

Participant 2 illustrated some of those concerns:

"So, in full candor, this has been a struggle that has, I would say, existed for prior strategic plans where there was not a comprehensive assessment of strategy of measures of success, of measures of performance, of measures of progress. So many of the documents in the past have been largely just kind of feel-good

documents but haven't been measurable and haven't been measured effectively, which is a problem because it's hard to determine, first of all, where your wins and losses are, it's hard to determine where your successes and failures are, but equally important, it's hard to then frame out where you want to go in the future if you don't have a kind of report card of where you had impact, where you've had movement, where you've had play. The current plan right now, which is recently implemented, is currently in the process of being developed alongside KPI's and other metrics or measures of success. So, we are in the process of building a sort of dashboard of what are the things we're doing, how far along are we, are we successful in them in some cases have we had to change direction because of new information or changing dynamics."

Participant 3 had similar sentiments:

"I mean, one of the key things and certainly when I've worked with organizations is monitoring the plan is often the part that's forgotten. It's like we set the plan, you know, beautiful plan. It looks good. We put it on the shelf, and we revisited 2 years later…but the idea is to really monitor it and really have regular meetings around it to really see where are we, what are we doing? What do we need to change to achieve those goals? So, it needs to be an active document. And that's what Middle States is supposed to do is really kind of, you know, encourage the universities to make their strategic planning active.

This concern for a well devised plan with market analysis, yet lacking the executable factor, led Participant 4 to vacate traditional measures with something more easily consumed and understood by the community:

"So, as we developed the strategic compass we moved from traditional… key performance indicators and are using more of OKR. They're very similar, OKR is Objective Key Results...what does this measure? In terms of our academic programs…how are we going to know if we're successful…in these programs…and the easiest way to measure that is are our students taking them and are these majors growing…are they in demand…so you can look at it that way."

Participant 1 summed up the primary responsibility to develop, implement, and execute on strategic planning. Each plan must be true to mission, consider the external market, and be executable. That ultimate responsibility sat with the President:

"Well, I think at the end of the day, it's the President. After much consultation with the constituents, which is the faculty, the alumni, if relevant to this, the students and the Board and the staff. But at the end of the day, the decision as to where to put the emphasis should be that of the President. Although obviously he or she needs to have the support of the Board."

Participant 2 added that the days of typical strategic planning development may be numbered:

"…I do think that the days of strategic planning being that defined process in a lot of these sort of best practices documents and elsewhere are written at a time that no longer exists for most institutions. And so, the thing I think that will be interesting that I don't have an answer to that…I don't think anybody does right now will be what plays out over time? How does this become kind of the phased new normal of higher education with regard to not having the luxuries we've

always had of moving very slowly and very deliberately and in some cases not

moving at all and being OK with that because the market never really shook us up

to a point where we didn't have to be. And I just think that those days are long

gone, and they'll be interesting to see how that iteration of normalcy moves

forward with the changing times and the continued crisis that we find ourselves

in."

Participant 4 was similarly direct in stating that assessment of internal focused strategic

plans were no longer a viable option for the institutional viability:

"…I will say that if you are not sensitive to market forces in your strategic plan, it

will fail. I'll be that bold in saying that. That higher ed has been insensitive to

market forces and in many ways and is struggling now because of that. I would

also add that I believe that higher ed needs to play a bigger role in influencing

society as a whole rather than, you know, I think higher ed and his historically

been too insular. We're focused on our students. We're focused on our programs.

You know we and the world has changed and so and I want to model that here…"

Conclusion

The Presidents were very aware of the importance to scan outside the university to

produce strategic plans that position their respective schools for success. Strategic planning

without the inclusion of market forces was viewed as a limitation of the effectiveness of the

plans and the ongoing concerns of their respective institutions face. Presidents did believe that

considering external market forces made for a better plan. The Presidents also stressed the need

for financial viability given the changing landscape which included devaluation of the very

product that higher education provides.

Summary

The themes that have emerged from this analysis were used to synthesize executive leadership's accounting of market forces and their infusion into the strategic planning process. Executive leadership viewed strategic planning as fundamental to maintain institutional roots as well as to scan the external environment for market positioning of the respective institution. The participants had awareness and appreciation for the defined five market forces, but all did not express the willingness or even a need to account for all five forces at the same time. This was a critically important finding. The crafting of these strategic plans do factor in both internal wants and needs with these external market forces. The data analysis surfaced broad thematic substance that included institutional identity development and structural formation to build a comprehensive planning process. That identity development and structural formation was a top-down approach with a transparent and participatory makeup involving a broad set of constituencies. Market forces had been considered in the development of these plans as higher education executive leadership demonstrated that this market analysis created more effective strategic plans. Concerns of failure to establish appropriate metrics and a lack of executing the final plan were expressed by the Presidents.

The analysis of the data collected in this case study demonstrated critical components of the Five Forces model defined by Porter (1980). By utilizing elements of this model, these institutions had developed strategic plans that accounted for variations of market forces, albeit in varied degrees by the respective institutions. This consideration of market forces provided insight that can be utilized by executive leadership in higher education to guide mission attainment and financial viability in a rapidly changing landscape. The explanations of the executive leader's thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors as well as the organizational frames and

process developments the institution crafts for building strategic plans connected this case study results to existing literature with implications on both future practice and research. Chapter 4 presented a full analysis of the data collected and analysis utilized. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the research findings, draws observations, discusses implications of the findings, and offers recommendations to executive higher education leadership.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research study was to describe consideration, inclusion, and significance of market forces in the development of strategic planning at higher education institutions. Using a qualitative case study based upon the model presented by Creswell and Creswell (2018), the design examined methods, procedures, behaviors, and attitudes that executive leadership in higher education applied to designing strategic planning processes. Guiding this examination was the use of the Five Forces Model by Porter (1980).

The data supported two primary themes. The first was the notion that students act as consumers. This concept was a driving force in the development of strategic planning and points to the external lens necessary for that planning. The second was the role of the President as an internal mechanism that forges both the completion and execution of strategic plans. This created a juxtaposition between the external view necessary for successful planning with the internal characteristics of the President's role. At first, this external/internal dynamic appeared to be contradictory in nature, but these two findings were more complementary as the President acted as both an originator of this market force awareness and as the campaigner for the infusing an awareness of market forces into the strategic planning process.

Porter's Five Forces Model

Porter's Five Forces model is a leading theoretical approach that substantiated economic forces on the establishment of strategic direction. As higher education is a profit-motivated industry offering a product that is substituted with alternatives, use of Porter's model was feasible in determining institutional position through strategy determination. Porter's model (Porter, 2008) asserted that five main forces shape industry competition and these include 1) the threats of new entrants, 2) the bargaining power of suppliers (faculty), 3) the bargaining power of

buyers (students), 4) the threats of substitute products, and 5) the respective rivalry among the competitors. Its usage was typically seen in corporate or business-related enterprises in the United States. Additional determinants such as technology, globalization, economic conditions, and regulation, do exert influence over the institutional entities in the sector but were not deemed as official forces (Porter, 2008). The model had been applied internationally for evaluating competitive position in the higher education sector (Man, 2014; Isabelle, et al., 2020). This model can be useful in the US higher education sector given the rapid changes impacting the industry.

Porter's (1980) model can inform higher education leaders on market forces and economic principles that impacted and influenced higher education strategic analysis and design. Review of the distinct forces in the model afforded executive leadership an external view of the industrial segment in which their organizations operated. Porter's framework, considering the decreasing demand for higher education (Grawe, 2018), can be a tool for executive leaders to establish a sustained competitive advantage to remain viable (Porter, 1980). Models that determined industrial structure were a prerequisite to understanding microeconomic decisions to position these institutions for success. This pivot for higher education institutions may be critical for the continuance of operations for many colleges and universities that serve vulnerable populations in the US. The need for change in how higher education institutions develop and execute strategic planning had a significant impact for both the institution and those students in these vulnerable populations.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis methods were selected to describe the topic and provide a deeper understanding on how or if executive leadership in higher education valued, accounted

for, and infused market forces into strategic planning. These findings were discussed within the framework of this study as well in association with the literature review. Limitations of the study followed this discussion of the findings as addressing these limitations before highlighting implications for practice and recommendations for potential future research were critical. At the study's closing stage, the findings more substantially answer the research questions presented. Those questions were: How does higher education executive leadership account for market forces in the development of strategic plans; how did market analysis infuse into the strategic planning process; and does higher education executive leadership believe that market analysis helps to create a more effective strategic plan?

Summary

The literature review found that the environment of higher education had changed significantly. In an overview of the competitive higher education landscape, emphasis on changing demographics, a decreased demand for higher education, and an acceleration of trends due to the COVID pandemic had portend a challenging future. In the evaluation of planning for future sustainability, executive leadership at colleges and universities need to change focus to better position their respective institutions to weather continuous challenges. A realization of and appreciation for business-centric strategic planning had been identified as necessary for this change in management.

The need for change was apparent given the multitude of ongoing struggles for institutions with non-descript brands, mostly with a regional designation. This opportunity to merge fiscal sustainability with socially and culturally responsive initiatives may lead to more focused curricular and workforce preparation programs that will increase outcomes for institutions and their respective students. Porter (1980) had developed multiple models that

evaluated competition, industrial structure, and strategic positioning. Porter's (1980) framework had historical success in commercial settings as well as educational systems outside the US. While there was little research suggesting usage within the US market, drawing from both domestic industrial segments as well as nationalized international systems, provided a foundation for the usage in the domestic market post pandemic.

This study showed that executive leadership were very aware of the importance to scan outside the university to produce strategic plans that position their respective schools for success. Strategic planning without the inclusion of market forces was viewed as a limitation of the effectiveness of the plans and the ongoing challenges their respective institutions faced. Presidents did believe that their inclusion made for a better plan. The Presidents also stressed the need for financial viability given a changing landscape which included the devaluation of the very product higher education provides.

Discussion

To answer the three research questions, the researcher's interview question set focused on two topics. The first was understanding the structural formation of the strategic planning process and the second was understanding the attitudes and behaviors of executive leadership that influenced that strategic planning process. The researcher grounded this understanding through the lens of Porter's (1980) Five Forces framework.

Market Force Consideration

The Presidents most frequently spoke to one market force: the bargaining power of the buyer (student). The Presidents appeared to be most aware of this force has on their institutions. It was likely that these Presidents' experiences serving at private institutions, with exceedingly high percentage of tuition dependency, played a role in that comprehension.

Given the need to bend towards a consumer driven market mindset, Presidents might be changing their views on traditional strategic planning based upon mission, finding the model obsolete. With consumers (students) seeking more definitive sets of durable, career-oriented skills, Presidents will continue to drive externally focused planning. This aligned with the literature highlighting the relevance of market force considerations. These market forces had manifested as marketization of higher education, increased consumer savvy, advanced technologies, greater supplier demands, and general competitive pressures (Slaughter & Cantwell, 2012, García-Morales, et al., 2021, Mause, 2009). Kleinman and Osley-Thomas (2014) further explored the likelihood of leadership considering the concepts of *student as consumer* and *education as product* in higher education. This literature connected with the Five Forces Model (Porter, 1980) through the importance of consider market forces in the construction of strategic planning.

President's Role in Leading Strategic Plan Development

Executive leaders in higher education were focused both on the external and internal environments of the industry and appeared to lead their institutions through a complex set of lenses. Presidents led the impetus to incorporate market forces into institutional planning. These leaders embodied and championed the strategic plan. Presidents viewed their role as critically important to its success. Additionally, the Presidents focused on establishing a unique brand identity and associated goals and objectives within the plan.

As the Presidents considered market forces in the development of strategic plans, they also played a role in the infusion of these market forces into the plans. Their leadership substantiated the importance of both inclusion and infusion into the planning. Their role further promoted transparency via an explicit appreciation for a participatory process. Their

development efforts and promotional influences cemented their lens as both externally and internally driven to create a comprehensive and effective process and artifact.

Conclusions

In the discussion of the study's findings, there had been similarities between those findings and the framework identified for the study. The framework provided a method to assess awareness of the external environment and best described the results of the study. The review of the literature began with strategic planning as a function within the accreditation process. This was typically a mission driven process and did not consider the external environment. With the competition remaining elevated in higher education, the demand for higher education being in decline, and society questioning of the value of the baccalaureate credential, the financial circumstances of many higher education institutions were in increasingly perilous circumstances.

There was significant discussion in the literature review of the necessity of understanding commercialized practices, including the concepts of *student as consumer* and *education as product*. The findings would suggest that there were mixed assumptions and a varied adoption of these concepts among the study participants. For the purposes of this study, it was reasonable to say that executive leadership operated along a spectrum of awareness and execution of business centric strategic planning that incorporated some market forces, but all did not express the willingness or even feel a need to account for all five forces at the same time.

The role of executive leadership in developing structure and the execution of the strategic planning process was salient. The findings did not provide specificity to how and what the Presidents may do to influence the outcomes of the plans in terms of success or failure. The study found that the Presidents set the tone for the importance of strategic plans, suggested the preferred structure of the process, and influenced the degree of transparency in the

communication surrounding progress and outcomes. This may be the most significant finding in this study. It suggested that the President's role was interwoven with and fundamentally guided the institutional process. As a result, the President embodied the plan as much as it became the institutional identity. Porter (1980) addressed this fundamental principle that Chief Executive Officers contour outcomes through their strategic decisions. When a sitting President stewarded a strategic planning process and subsequently left the institution, the strategic plan may also leave with them. This pointed to the unique role the President played in the strategic planning process.

Interpretation

The discoveries in this study emphasized the role executive leadership played in influencing the consideration, inclusion, and significance of market forces in strategic planning. Additionally, these market forces, primarily that of the student as consumer, played critical importance to the ongoing concerns facing higher education institutions. It was likely that intentionality in the awareness of and inclusion of market forces in strategic plans will continue to be a critical factor for the financial success of many higher education institutions.

Limitations

All research has limitations, and this research was no exception. A larger sample representing private institutions in the New York metropolitan area might have presented greater insights. Inclusion of public institutions in the study may have provided different lenses through which to evaluate the impact of external market forces. The juxtaposition of public and private institutions may have presented profound comparisons of executive leadership thought processes and behaviors of market forces in addition to potential variations in strategic planning process design and execution.

Another limitation was the lack of discussion from the Presidents around most of the five forces in any substantially focused manner. There was a primary focus on the consumer (student), but less focus expressed in the others. This focus on only one force may signify either a lack of awareness of other forces or less importance being attributed to them, either in isolation or in combination with each other.

The study included both a survey and interview phase for the participants. Demographic information was not captured in the survey but was apparent in the interview. The use of journaling was utilized to keep the researcher aware of how participant identities influenced the responses to the question sets. This use of journaling employed throughout the case study also allowed the researcher to maintain awareness of his own biases and maintain objectivity (Creswell & Creswell. 2018). These biases both in the participants and the researcher created such a limitation.

Porter's (1980) framework assessed competition in an industry by analyzing the structure of that industry. This analysis was a method for organizations to consider a type of strategy that harnessed these forces in a beneficial way to establish a unique strategic positioning. These five forces included the bargaining power of buyers, the bargaining power of suppliers, the threat of substitutes, the threat of new entrants, and rivalry amongst existing competitors. Unfortunately, the model has not been consistently applied in the higher education industry in the United States. Additionally, since higher education was not typically viewed as an industry, the Five Forces model had not been a common tool identified in that evaluating of the higher education sector. Given this lack of regular review and the time distance from its inception to today, questions about the value of applying the model should be expected. Porter's model might be good for

academe but may need to be further refined with terms more aligned to that of the higher education industry.

Implications

The topic and results of this study had significance to researchers and practitioners in and out of the higher education industry. Considering the downturn certain areas of US industry, it may no longer be viable to lead higher education institutions from an internal, mission-only, lens. Executive leadership in higher education may be forced to embrace, with greater urgency, a broader incorporation of market forces into strategic plans. Executive leadership in higher education will find notable utility in these findings amid today's rapidly changing landscape. Market force infusion will be important to institutions with robust strategic planning processes as it is to those in an earlier development phase.

Social Justice Intersection

If higher education institutions were to move toward a consumer driven approach, they must connect with the next generation of consumer. These consumers (students) are not only more racially diverse then previous generations but are also more likely to be in a lower socioeconomic status (Brown & Davis, 2001; Chan, 2016; Gonzalez et al., 2003; Sandefur et al., 2006; Mocca et.al, 2019). These consumers may be more focused on social mobility, which can be expressed as a return on investment, and institutional strategic plans must deliberately reflect this consumer focus.

There was no discernible social mobility concept or language utilized by the Presidents. Additionally, there was neither definitive discussion about the composition of the current student body at large nor their view on the importance of embedding this concept within strategic plans. This highlights an opportunity to codify this critical demand from consumers.

While there was no definitive discussion about the intersecting demographics of the student bodies of the institutions, the university Presidents in the study did appear to understand the importance of incorporating expressed diversity elements moving forward. Participant 2 stated:

> "…We are very much an institution built on diversity. We are very much built on, I would say, a focus of bringing in students, many of whom might not find their place elsewhere in higher education into the fold and into the support of a community that I think understands them and serves to serve them. And I think in many respects, I think it's important that we kind of focus with that lens because the reality is that diversity will be the theme of our learners going forward, both, certainly with regard to racial and ethnic diversity, because of the area we're in and the students we serve, but also as we start to look at diversity with a different lens in the increasing numbers of students identifying as LGBTQ, one out of every five students come in at college identifies that way, understanding there's a diversity there. Understanding neurodivergent learners and the great growth in Neurodivergence in our K-12 system that we're now seeing permeate into higher education. All of these things mean that diversity has to go beyond what we've often thought of, which is let's get more people of color in our classrooms or teaching students, which is certainly an important initiative, but it's a much, much broader sweep than that. It's much broader than just simply we need to diversify to make our learners look like our world or make our faculty look more like our learners and it goes to thinking about all of the ways that diversity plays out on a

college campus and how to build essentially a community of belonging in our

strategy going forward."

Participant 1 was less descriptive in this importance but cuts to the point:

"…I think because of the Supreme Court decisions, schools are going to have to

broaden their approach to this issue. And therefore, it's hard to imagine that you

could broaden it without it becoming a more important part of the plan."

Finally, participant 3 was more direct in the connection of the diversity focus and the

importance to workforce:

"…I've…changed the DEI and made it a skill, intercultural competence. So

instead of talking about DEI, that we will *teach* diversity, we're saying

intercultural competence, being able to *work* with different people in a very

diverse and growingly diverse world is a key success factor."

This blending of financial considerations and social mobility can be powerful tool for

solvency in higher education. Zemsky et al., (2005) described this connection as being "market-

smart and mission-centered". This business-oriented strategic planning can intersect with

institutional mission to impact the promotion of social mobility for those external and internal to

the higher education institution. The link between market-driven planning objectives and campus

policy may be one strategy that ensures financial viability while fulfilling an institutional

mission. This marriage of opposing directives spoke both to the intangible goals of academic

enlightenment and the tangible goals of economic advancement and social mobility. This

mixture was particularly important for students from lower socioeconomic status as they viewed

a college degree as a steppingstone for a better economic position and developing of social

capital for themselves and their families (Chan, 2016).

Recommendations

Future studies that expand on the attitudes of both private and public higher education leadership would broaden the perspectives of executive leadership relating to market forces awareness and consideration in the development of strategic planning. Other future studies that seek the perspectives of the varied layers of the organizational bureaucracy to assess the clarity of market force infusion and the assessment of the execution of the strategic plans over time will have greater utility. Since the President acted as the both originator of market force awareness and as the campaigner for market force infusion into the strategic planning process, there may be an additional need for an educational process throughout the institution that reinforces both the importance of market force consideration and the critical role that the President plays in the process. This may be acute for those constituents that author strategic plans as part of the accreditation process. In addition to addressing the institutional mission focus within the accreditation process, researching whether the awareness of market forces and the infusion into strategic plans produce better results than simply the President as champion will be warranted.

Conclusion

This case study highlighted the unstable future facing executive leadership in higher education. Changing perceptions of higher education, the devaluation of the credential, increasing attendance costs necessitating excessive student debt burdens, detrimental demographic headwinds, and an unknown trajectory of the post pandemic environment contributed to challenges faced by executive leadership.

It appeared evident that executive leadership needed to center on the notion that their higher education institutions operated in a consumer driven market. This rendered traditional processes of strategic planning obsolete, considering the challenges facing the industry. No

longer can college and university Presidents build plans around only mission and only in accordance with accreditation processes.

Given this *student as consumer* and *education as product* viewpoint, consumer behavior had manifested as a demand for workforce development. This drives the industry and the contemporary institutional strategic planning process. Executive leadership, focusing on these market forces, may be compelled to drive Boards of Trustees to focus externally more than ever before.

The existing model of strategic planning focused on faculty who have narrow perspectives of interest, instead of marketplace demands, requires an overhaul. This overhaul will prove to be a difficult, yet necessary, one for both the financial viability of private institutions of non-descript identities and to serve the expectations of a changing demographic of student with an appetite for educational offerings linked directly to the workforce. This will be a difficult conversation for private institutions within higher education. The industry is at a pivot point and how executive leadership grapples with these realities will have wide ranging implications on institutional viability in this sector.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Survey on Strategic Planning in Higher Education Institutions

This instrument is intended to collect data on the development and design of strategic planning in higher education institutions. The preferred participant is the university president or primary designee such as the chief of staff, provost, or vice president for strategic planning. All questions are related to this strategic planning and are answerable by the institutional selected participant.

Institutional Strategic Plan Participant Involvement

1. What is your position title: _____

2. Were you or are you actively engaged in the ***design*** of the strategic plan?

_____Yes   _____No

3. Were you or are you actively engaged in the ***creation*** of the strategic plan?

_____Yes   _____No

Institutional Strategic Plan Development

4. Was your strategic plan linked to the outcomes (recommendations) of a self-study (i.e., to fulfill accreditation requirements)?

_____Yes   _____No

5. Which campus constituents were selected to serve on the strategic planning committee? (Please check all that apply)

> Board of Trustees ____
> Executive Leadership (President, VPs) ____
> Academic Leadership (Deans) ____
> University/College Faculty ____
> Managerial Staff (Directors, Associate Directors) ____
> Staff (Associate, Assistant Directors) ____
> Support Staff (Clerical) ____
> Graduate Students ____
> Undergraduate Students ____
> Alumni ____
> Corporate/Community Constituents (please specify) _____
> Other (please specify) _____

6. How were the above constituents selected to serve on the strategic planning committee?

Self-nomination ____
Elected ____
Appointed by Board of Trustees____
Appointed by President ____
Other (Please specify) _____

Institutional Strategic Plan Design

7. In the creation of your strategic plan, did your institution follow a specific model?

_____Yes   _____No

   If yes, was the model based on any of the following?

      Former strategic plan ____
      External model ____
      Internal/organic developed model ____
      Other (please specify) _____

8. In designing your strategic plan, how important were the following factors in its creation?

   (1 = not important, 2 = important, 3 = very important)

   1. Goals expressed by the Board of Trustees ____
   2. Goals expressed by the President ____
   3. Input from Executive Leadership (VPs) ____
   4. Input from Academic Leadership (Deans) ____
   5. Input from University/College Faculty ____
   6. Input from Managerial Staff (Directors, Associate Directors) ____
   7. Input from Staff (Associate, Assistant Directors)
   8. Input from Support Staff (Clerical) ____
   9. Input from Graduate Students _____
   10. Input from Undergraduate Students ____
   11. Alumni ____
   12. Corporate/Community Constituents (please specify and rank) _____
   13. Other (please specify and rank) _____

9. In designing your strategic plan, how important were these factors in its creation?

   (1 = not important, 2 = important, 3 = very important)

   1. Competition (i.e., rivalry among institutions) within the New York metropolitan area of the US higher education industrial segment ____
   2. Potential of new entrants (additional competitors) into the higher education industrial segment ____

3. Negotiating power of suppliers (i.e., faculty and staff) _____
4. Negotiating power of customers (i.e., new, and existing students) _____
5. Threat of substitute products (e.g., corporate training programs, apprenticeships, trade education) _____

10. Were members of your institutional strategic planning committee advised/aware of these factors as a focal point of their charge?

(1 = not advised/aware, 2 = aware/advised, 3 = very aware/advised)

1. Competition (i.e., rivalry among institutions) within the New York metropolitan area of the US higher education industrial segment _____
2. Potential of new entrants (additional competitors) into the higher education industrial segment _____
3. Negotiating power of suppliers (i.e., faculty and staff) _____
4. Negotiating power of customers (i.e., new, and existing students) _____
5. Threat of substitute products (e.g., corporate training programs, apprenticeships, trade education) _____

11. In the final strategic plan result, to what degree does your institutional strategic plan directly address and/or respond to these factors?

(1 = does not respond, 2 = responds, 3 = directly and measurably responds)

1. Competition (i.e., rivalry among institutions) within the New York metropolitan area of the US higher education industrial segment _____
2. Potential of new entrants (additional competitors) into the higher education industrial segment _____
3. Negotiating power of suppliers (i.e., faculty and staff) _____
4. Negotiating power of customers (i.e., new, and existing students) _____
5. Threat of substitute products (e.g., corporate training programs, apprenticeships, trade education) _____

Institutional Strategic Plan Process

12. What timeframe does your current strategic plan cover?

1-3 years____
3-5 years____
more than 5 years _____
Other (please specify) _____

13. Does your strategic plan call for regular review and revision?

_____Yes   _____No

       If yes, how often?
       Annually _____
       Biennially _____
       Quarterly _____
       Other (please specify) _____

14. Does your strategic plan require regular updates to the campus community on achievement of goals and objectives?

_____Yes   _____No

       If yes, how often?
       Annually _____
       Biennially _____
       Quarterly _____
       Other _____

15. Does your strategic plan include embedded Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) or other performance metrics?

_____Yes   _____No

       If yes, which?
            KPIs _____
            Other (please specify) _____

Appendix B

Interview Question Guide

- What is the impetus for the development of a strategic plan? How does the strategic planning process work in design?

- What are the goals and objectives? How does the institution decide on these goals and objectives? What is the significance of these goals and objectives?

- What are the key performance indicators (KPI) and critical success factors (CSF) for the strategic plan? Are these indicators utilized to assess the performance of the plan?

- Have there been external and internal phenomena that contributed to the development of the plan? Were these phenomena significant contributors to the assumptions within the strategic plan? Why or why not?

- Do economic, social, or cultural events that occur outside the institution, but not in the higher education industry, contribute to strategy development at your institution? If so, in what manner does this occur?

- Does the institution consider market forces when crafting the strategic plan process? These forces include the strength of competitor institutions, potential new competitor schools, suppliers (faculty), customers (students), and substitutes to higher education (corporate training, apprenticeships, trade education). If so, what forces? If not, why not?

- What is your specific responsibility related to the planning, implementing, and execution of the strategic plan? Do you play an active role in the development of the KPI, CSF, goals, and objectives in the strategic plan?

- Do other executive, middle management, and/or front-line staff contribute to the strategic planning process? If so, which employee segment? In your experience, would you describe this inclusion of others as a successful or not successful design in the implementation of the strategic plan?

- Are there other constituent groups, external or internal, that could have contributory importance to the development, implementation, and execution of the strategic planning process?

- What do you believe is critically required for the successful execution of a strategy at a higher education institution? Why are these elements necessary to the continuance of a successful implementation?

- Are your institution's diversity initiatives a driving force in the construction of the strategic plan?

- Did you use a model as presented by American Council on Education (ACE), Society for College and University Planning (SCUP), or Association of Governing Boards (AGB)?

Appendix C

Principal Investigator: Kenneth M. Schneider, MBA
Investigator's Phone Number:
Department: Educational Leadership and Professional Studies Protocol Approval
Date: 7/27/2023

I have been asked to participate in a research study entitled *Executive Leadership Consideration of Market Forces: A Case Study of Strategic Planning Development In Higher Education.* The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of the influence of market forces on strategic planning.

I understand that I will be asked to respond to questions in a survey instrument with a response time of ten (10) minutes and during a subsequent interview of approximately forty-five (45) minutes in duration. I understand that my participation in the interview is entirely voluntary, and I may end my participation in this research at any time.

Risks associated with participation in the study are minimal, meaning that the risks involved are marginal as volunteers will be given pseudonyms and institutions will be anonymous. A benefit of participation in this study is an enhancement of the general knowledge of this study area.

I understand that any data and recordings collected as part of this study will be stored in a safe and secure location, and that the data will be destroyed when this research is completed. I understand that I will be audio-recorded and/or video-recorded and that these recordings will be destroyed when the research is completed.

I understand that my identity will always be protected and that my name will not be used without my separate written permission. I understand that the results of this study will not be reported in a way that would identify individual participants.

If I have questions about this study, I may call the principal investigator, Kenneth M. Schneider, listed in the heading of this document. If I have any questions or concerns about this research, my participation, the conduct of the investigator, or my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Program Director, Dr. Robert Seal.

By signing this consent form, I agree to participate in this research study.

Name of Participant_____

Signature of Participant_____: Date_____

Name of Investigator Kenneth M. Schneider

Signature of Investigator _____Date_____

Appendix D

Dear President or Designee,

I am a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership and Professional Studies at William Paterson University, which is in Wayne, New Jersey. The purpose of this email is to make a request for participation in my research. I am specifically looking for the participation of executive leaders and the role of market forces in strategic planning at higher education institutions in the New York metropolitan area of the US.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of market forces on the creation of strategic planning. The proposed study will explore if institutions utilize a corporate model to enhance the ongoing performance of higher educational institutions.

The study will require executive leadership to voluntarily respond to an initial survey instrument and then participate in an interview between August and October of 2023.

Participation is completely voluntary, and all data analyzed from the questionnaire will remain anonymous. Risks associated with participation in the study are minimal, meaning that the risks involved are marginal as volunteers will be given pseudonyms and institutions will be anonymous. A benefit of participation in this study is an enhancement of the general knowledge of this study area and greater likelihood of institutional performance toward goals and objectives.

If you agree to participate, please reply to this email along with the attached informed consent form. This form must be signed and sent along with your email response confirming participation. If you require any further documentation, it will be my pleasure to provide any required elements for approval.

Kindly contact me at your earliest convenience should you have any questions about this research. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Kenneth M. Schneider, MBA
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Leadership and Professional Studies
William Paterson University
1600 Valley Road
Wayne, NJ 07470
schneiderk@wpunj.edu

VITA

Kenneth Michael Schneider, Jr.

Education: Doctor of Education, William Paterson University of New Jersey, 2024

Master of Business Administration, William Paterson University of New Jersey, 2004

Bachelor of Science, Montclair State University, 1996