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Karen Hart Bucher  
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CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

MANAGEMENT PLANNING

by

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Old Dominion University in the Partial Fulfillment of the  
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

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## ABSTRACT

CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENROLLMENT  
MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Karen Hart Bucher  
Old Dominion University  
Director: Dr. Edward Raspiller

Enrollment management has become a common practice at four-year institutions, but has not been extensively explored at community colleges. As students have more educational options available to them, community colleges have begun to explore ways to grow their enrollment, improve student retention and increase graduation rates. This study explored the critical components necessary for implementing a successful enrollment management initiative at three community colleges across the U.S.

To determine the critical components at community colleges, a case study was conducted. Each case was evaluated individually and then the three cases were compared with each other to determine thematic similarities and differences. This study determined why the community college implemented enrollment management, how their initiative was structured, what some of the successful and unsuccessful aspects of their initiative were and how their plan was evaluated. To gather information, interviews were conducted with the college enrollment manager, focus groups were held with the college's enrollment management committee, and college planning documents were reviewed.

The findings of the study indicated community colleges were most successful at implementing enrollment management when there were high levels of collaboration,

communication, and institutional commitment. Barriers to success were found to include a lack of institutional commitment and limited staffing, space, and financial resources.

Recommendations to community college practitioners include developing routine meetings with key offices at the college to discuss enrollment, establishing clear timelines for evaluating the plan, and to give the staff responsible for the enrollment management effort the authority to make decisions impacting enrollment decisions.

Implications of the findings may assist community colleges as they consider implementing enrollment management practices at their campuses.

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of three very special women:

My friend and mentor Linda Bing Thomas who gave me my first job in higher education, taught me by example how to lead, and inspired my love of helping people make their dreams of a college education a reality.

My grandmother Minnie Hart who even with an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education was one of the most intelligent women I have ever met. She inspired my love of reading and of education---teaching me that we should grab every opportunity to learn and that teachers come in many shapes and sizes.

Finally, my grandmother Aletta Ritter who was very proud of her first grandchild to attend college and was thrilled to learn I decided to make the smartest choice by attending our local community college. Staying home allowed me to spend even more time with you---memories I will cherish forever.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completing a dissertation has always been one of my dreams, but like any dream it does not come true without the help and support of so many. I wish to thank the following:

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Cohort 4, the greatest support group and fellow PhDers I could have asked for.

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Skip and Sandy Hart, my parents, who have always taught me that through hard work everything is possible, that helping people is as cool as it gets, that learning should never end, and I should never settle for second best. Thank you for always supporting me—you are the greatest parents ever;

Julie Overbaugh, my sister, who reminds me on a daily basis that “life is too short not to live it.” I appreciate the support you have always given me even though my dreams were “nerdier” than your dreams! Watching how you live your life is an inspiration to me;

Greg, my husband, for his partnership and support while I completed this program. Our family motto is ‘what one of us does, we all do’. I didn’t do this all by

myself and I never even tried to pretend I did. Thanks for your constant encouragement and being proud of me as I did this;

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Community colleges have operated for many years under the philosophy that if you “build it, they will come”; simply enrolling students in their colleges because the access to higher education was in close proximity. In fact, according to Cohen and Brawer (1990), “for most community college students, the choice is not between the community college and a senior residential institution; it is between the local college and nothing” (p. 439). When it comes to college attendance today, however, students now have many choices not available in previous times. If students decide to stay at home to attend college instead of moving away from home, no longer is the community college the only option. With the changing economy, an increase in alternatives, distance learning choices in attaining a degree, a push toward the privatization of higher education, and an ever-changing student demographic, community colleges are working harder to enroll students, to retain them, and ultimately graduate them. With so many factors competing with the community college in a student’s own backyard, the time of “build it and they will come” is over (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Irvine, 2001).

Long familiar to the four-year colleges and universities, community colleges are now investing in the concept of “enrollment management.” College administrations are spending more time recruiting new students and implementing strategies to retain them until graduation. College leadership is challenged to become more creative in course offerings and course delivery methods, to expend a great deal of effort in finding out what today’s students want from an institution. Recruiting and retaining students has become a major focus of community college leadership (SallieMae, 2006). Although the

four-year institutions have engaged in enrollment management activities for years (Clark, 2000; Dolence, 2005; Hossler, 2004; Lane, 2002; Simpson, 1997), this is foreign territory for community college leadership.

### *Defining Enrollment Management*

The term enrollment management has been present in higher education literature for over 30 years. Jack Maguire, a faculty member at Boston College, coined the phrase in the 1970s when he was describing an approach for influencing college enrollments (Hossler, 2000). There are several definitions of the term used in contemporary literature. Dolence (1996) has defined enrollment management as a “comprehensive process designed to help an institution achieve and maintain the optimum recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of students, where ‘optimum’ is defined within the academic context of the institution” (p.16). Huddleston (2000) said, “optimally, an institution’s enrollment is comprehensively developed and is based on a strategic, integrative plan that includes the identification, attraction, selection, encouragement, registration, retention, and graduation of targeted student segments” (p.65) Hossler and Bean (1990) believed that enrollment management is:

An organizational concept and a systematic set of activities designed to enable educational institutions to exert more influence over their student enrollments. Organized by strategic planning and supported by institutional research, enrollment management activities concern student college choice, transition to college, student attrition and retention, and student outcomes. These processes are studied to guide institutional practices in the areas of new student recruitment and financial aid, student support services, curriculum development, and other

academic areas that affect enrollments, student persistence, and student outcomes from college (p. 5).

Similarly, Spence, Dassance, and Minter (1988) stated enrollment management is a “holistic concept that encompasses the clarification of institutional mission, program development, marketing, recruiting, admissions, financial aid, orientation, and retention”. Keller (1991) took a more passionate view of defining enrollment management by stating:

It is not often admitted, but most colleges are run primarily, or at least heavily, for the benefit of the faculty. Enrollment management seeks instead to make students central to enlarge a college’s market share of traditional students in a shrinking market. It is a form of one-upmanship in a newly competitive area. But it is also an effort that benefits young people who are in college to be the reason colleges exist. (p.3)

Enrollment management encompasses many areas within the college environment. These areas typically include recruitment, admissions, registration, financial aid, career planning, academic support, orientation, institutional research, business office, alumni services, and marketing (Penn, 1999). The common denominator among all of these areas on the college campus is that they encompass the college process from the point of initial student inquiry through graduation. Data collection at each end of the enrollment spectrum is essential. Glover (1986) indicated that one of the goals of an enrollment management system is to “integrate external environmental trends and internal enrollment data across years and to track student cohorts longitudinally from prospective applicants through application, enrollment, retention, and alumni follow-up.”

### *The Evolution of Enrollment Management*

The concept of enrollment management began in the 1970s when the higher education community realized the Baby Boom was diminishing and enrollment crises were imminent. It was during this time that Boston College was struggling to increase enrollment. Jack Maguire, the dean of admissions at Boston College, was the first to use the term in a public document. His description of enrollment management was that of a process that integrates disparate functions involving recruitment, funding, tracking, retaining and replacing students as they move “toward, within, and away from the university” (Black, 2001). Unlike Boston College, community colleges across the United States were experiencing enrollment increases. In 1970s there were 4.3 million 18-year olds in the U.S. and colleges received an expected influx of enrollment during this timeframe. After this, however, college administrators anticipated an enrollment decline. What they did not anticipate was the incursion of minority students, adult learners, and an increasing number of women students (Keller, 1999; Lane, 2002). Consequently, community colleges continued to experience an increase in their enrollments. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (1998), the community college student enrollment grew from 4.5 million students to 5.2 million students, resulting in a 15% increase.

Between 1990 and 1997, however, community college enrollment began to slow, realizing only a 3% growth. Declining enrollments were the result of three trends: a) a drop in live births in the early 1970s, b) a decline in the number of students graduating high school, and c) an economic shift in the United States (Kemerer, Baldrige & Green,

1982). Community college administrators began to seize this opportunity to examine enrollment trends and college enrollment management became the new focus.

### *Community College Growth*

Community colleges underwent great change between the mid-1960s and 1980. The number of public two-year colleges nearly doubled and enrollments quadrupled (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Several factors contributed to this growth: a) high birthrates in the 1940s, b) the changing complexion of the student body, c) political leadership, and d) expanded access. In addition, the creation of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 and its implementation after World War II opened the doors of the community colleges to veterans (Brubacher & Rudy, 1977). Later in the 1970s and 1980s, additional growth occurred that increased enrollments of non-traditional students. Many of these students were Vietnam veterans and first-generation college students (Hossler & Bean, 1990).

Today, over 6.8 million students enroll in credit courses in the 1173 community colleges in the United States (American Association of Community Colleges, 2010). While community colleges experienced such a large enrollment growth in the 1970s, predictions were made about the potential decline in enrollments among community colleges over the next 25 years (Hossler, 1984). Hossler predicted that a new leadership agenda should be implemented and this agenda must include enrollment management to optimize enrollment and retention efforts. Hossler (1984) noted several innovative programming efforts in enrollment management. Some of these include supplemental instruction, freshman seminars, financial aid discounting, block scheduling, faculty academic advising, and learning communities. College administrations have continued to revolutionize enrollment management efforts on their campuses.

### *Challenges of Community Colleges*

Enrollment management plans at a four-year university focus on the “quality” of the college students they are recruiting. This criterion determines whether they will achieve success at their college and is integral to the success of recruiting and retaining students (Clagett & Kerr, 1993; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). By contrast, community colleges are “open access” institutions. This mission often creates the challenge to balance the two conflicting goals—of maintaining quality in education and services while managing enrollments. In addition to these competing goals, colleges also face increasing demands from government agencies and accreditation bodies for an increase in retention and graduation rates, postgraduate outcomes, and accountability while preserving a commitment to the mission of open door admissions (Dougherty & Hong, 2006; Rosenfeld, 1999).

### *Institutional Commitment*

College enrollment managers are integral to influencing enrollments, but they must also take an aggressive approach to establishing a college-wide culture that is conducive to promoting the strategic connection between enrollment and institutional effectiveness (Hossler & Bean, 1990). Many studies have explored why colleges have difficulty in enrollment management planning. Three primary reasons are: a) the lack of understanding that enrollment management is a process that is fluid, not stagnate (Bean, 1990); b) a failure to understand the four components of enrollment management which are: institutional commitment, strategic planning, integration, and planning (Dolence, Miyahara, Grajeda, & Repp, 1987); and c) the inability to recognize that the

responsibility of implementing an enrollment management plan begins with the college president and extends throughout the college community (Mabry, 1987).

Community colleges are historically reputed to have enrollment because they are affordable and embedded in the community. With the changing dynamic of those pursuing higher education, community colleges are not necessarily the only choice students have. Instead, consumers of higher education are looking on-line for college education and choosing convenience rather than affordability or location. Because of this, community colleges have looked to enrollment management as the tool to gain a better understanding of their college enrollment. As this is a new concept for community colleges, research that does exist on this topic is limited to quantitative research and does not fully explain why colleges engage in this endeavor and what process they use to achieve an initiative of this magnitude at their college. While many community colleges are pursuing enrollment management, it is the opinion of the researcher that more colleges will follow suit. This research is designed to offer some understanding of what has been successful and unsuccessful in community college enrollment management and will provide a place to begin for those colleges interested in initiating their own effort in understanding their enrollment.

### Background

Community colleges experienced a large population growth and high demand on their campuses during the 1960s and 1970s. This growth began to decline in the 1990s due to local and state funding cuts. As a result, community colleges turned their attention to enrollment management as a method of increasing their enrollment, and in some cases, controlling their enrollments. While the literature largely focuses on the unique needs of



four-year colleges and universities, community college research is becoming more prevalent as there is an increasing need to manage community college enrollments (Clark, 2000; Dolence, 2005; Hossler, 2004; Lane, 2002; Simpson, 1997).

Noel-Levitz (2004), a national leader in enrollment management consulting, noted that only 60% of community colleges have an enrollment management plan in place and 37% have not implemented any type of formalized plan. Before implementing an enrollment management plan, colleges struggling to create one or those who have not yet found a need to develop a plan may benefit from the lessons learned from schools who have paved the way with their enrollment management initiatives. Having a contextual basis to draw from allows colleges new to the enrollment management arena the ability to institute processes that have proven to be effective (Noel-Levitz, 2004).

#### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this multiple case study is to explore and further the understanding of enrollment management in community colleges and to identify critical components necessary for effective enrollment management planning.

#### Problem Statement

There are large gaps in contemporary literature regarding enrollment management in the community college setting. The literature largely focuses on four-year institutions and the practices that are unique to them (Clark, 2000; Dolence, 2005; Hossler, 2004; Lane, 2002; Simpson, 1997). The purpose of this research is to advance the literature regarding successful enrollment management plans in community colleges by studying successful practices within community colleges. Recent research has focused on varying aspects of community college enrollment management plans in Alabama, Florida,

Maryland, and in California. In addition, research has been conducted to determine successful enrollment management practices across community college systems (Barnes, 1993; LoBasso, 2005; Simmons, 2007). The current body of literature does not include research of several community colleges across the U.S. who do not share the common denominator of being part of the same state system. This research will serve to fill this gap.

### Research Questions

The research questions for this study were designed to determine successful practices of enrollment management plans in community colleges. Specifically, what practices were implemented from enrollment management plans that lead to an enrollment increase? The specific questions are:

1. What is the focus of the college's enrollment management plan (recruitment, retention, managing enrollment) and how is the implementation of this effort structured (committee, workgroup)?
2. What have been some of the successful and unsuccessful practices of the plan?
3. Does the college have a process for evaluating the enrollment management plan? If so, how were the steps determined? If not, how will the success of the plan be measured?

### Research Design

Qualitative methods were employed to gather data about each college's enrollment management plan. Since triangulated data are stronger and more conclusive (Patton, 2002), the researcher conducted a documents review of enrollment management planning

documents and enrollment management plans, interview the college enrollment manager and those staff involved in the enrollment management committee. This multiple case study analyzed three community colleges to review their current enrollment management practices and review their enrollment management plans. Selected colleges had an enrollment management plan in place at their college and had an active enrollment management committee. Several community colleges in the U.S. were contacted via email to determine if they have implemented an enrollment management plan at their college and if they have achieved an enrollment increase in recent semesters.

### Research Methodology

This study utilized a multiple case study method of qualitative research. Qualitative research offers a rich and descriptive analysis of situations, events, people, and behaviors that make this form of scholarly inquiry the preferred method of studying and analyzing enrollment management plans. Merriam (1998) explains that multiple case studies involve collecting and analyzing data from several cases.

Case studies offer a means of investigating complex social units that consist of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Merriam (1998) has stated:

It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences.

As case studies are anchored in real life situations, they result in a rich and holistic account of the phenomenon. Due to its strengths, case studies are appealing for education and other applied fields and have proven thorough in the investigation of educational innovations, program evaluations, and for informing policy.

Using the case study approach for this study provided understanding of each individual case and of the cases collectively. The following sections describe the institutions that will participate in this study and the procedure the researcher used when analyzing the data.

### *Institutions Selected*

The subjects in this study were community colleges who have completed enrollment management plans and who have experienced an enrollment increase. Colleges were contacted based on their size and those who agree to participate in interviews and focus groups, and document analysis of their enrollment management plans. Three U.S. community colleges that have enrollments of no more than 20,000 credit students were selected. These colleges were studied to assess best practices among their enrollment management plans in an effort to ascertain what strategies and tactics have led to their enrollment growth. This effort allowed for conclusions on some of the critical components in enrollment management plans that lead to growth in enrollment. Although there is no prescribed formula in enrollment management plans, neither does there seem to be a general model available (Clark, 2000). Such a framework would be advantageous for college leaders. An enrollment management plan allows leaders to link it with the college's strategic plan, college mission, college vision, and allows for more productive goal setting as an institution. Incorporating enrollment management efforts into the college business process allows leadership to concentrate on this effort and receive institutional commitment from all constituencies (Ward, 2000).

### *Data Analysis*

Data collection encompassed several methods of qualitative research including interviews and focus groups of enrollment management committee members, and a review of enrollment management planning documents. Using several data collection methods allowed for triangulation. Triangulation is necessary to ensure all data collected are an accurate depiction of enrollment management practices at each college (Patton, 2002).

A review of common themes among the enrollment management plans, the administrator interviews about their enrollment management plan and their college process, and observations of the enrollment management meetings was considered for each participating college. All case notes were transcribed and coded. Boyatzis (1998) has stated that a good thematic code should capture qualitative richness of the phenomenon. In addition, a good thematic code should contain the following five things: a) a label, b) definition of what the theme concerns, c) a description of how to know when the theme occurs in the data, d) a description of any qualifications to the identification of the theme, and e) any positive and negative examples of what should be included to eliminate possible confusion when looking for the theme.

After all data were coded, all emergent themes were identified and reviewed. Following the review of the themes, an analysis was conducted to capture what strategies and implementation suggestions are unique to each college and have promoted enrollment increases and successful plan implementation on the campus. Themes within the interviews and documents analysis were coded and analyzed for common content. To insure all appropriate themes were identified, the researcher submitted all thematic data

to an external auditor for review. The auditor's role was to consider all data as presented to ensure that all themes were identified and discussed.

### Definitions

The following terms will be used throughout this study. For the purpose of clarification, they are defined as follows:

*Enrollment manager*: the individual responsible for managing a college's enrollment management plan or enrollment and retention activities.

*Enrollment management committee*: a group of college personnel who represent the offices that influence enrollment (e.g., financial aid, admissions, orientation) and college faculty.

*Community college*: two-year institutions offering coursework leading to an associate's degree, vocational certifications or training programs, and certification of high school credentials.

*Enrollment management*: a college-wide initiative involving offices such as admissions, financial aid, first-year experience, retention, academic programs, student life, and new student orientation designed to direct the college efforts of recruiting, retaining, and managing student enrollments.

### Limitations of Study

There are several limitations to this study. One limitation of this study is that the results may not transfer easily to other cases in other community colleges. Each community college is unique within their service region, demographic, and in number of students served. Many community colleges have implemented enrollment management

plans that are not documented in the literature so it is impossible to detail every individual aspect of enrollment management plans of community colleges in the U.S.

Another limitation is researcher bias. The researcher in this study currently holds the position of enrollment manager in a community college with an active enrollment management initiative. She understood many of the concepts and terms used as conversations occurred. Data collected was filtered through this lens and may have produced some bias in the findings due to the assumptions she has developed in her own position and in some of the questions that were posed during her site visits.

A third limitation is the research protocol. The methodology of this study included one visit with the college and one conversation with the enrollment manager and the committee. Having limited interactions at the college may leave out key individuals at each college who could have contributed to the results of this study.

A fourth limitation of this study is the interview protocol. Interviewing only one individual about why the college entered into an enrollment management initiative may limit the responses provided to the researcher. This limitation may have inhibited the researcher from gaining a complete perspective about the college's decision to begin an enrollment management initiative.

The final limitation of this study is the key informant used to identify colleges who have active enrollment management committees. There may be some bias with the colleges he suggested that may limit the results of this study. Other colleges not identified may have also provided important information regarding critical components in community college enrollment management.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review the literature that supports this study. The purpose of this research is to determine the critical components necessary for effective enrollment management planning at community colleges. Community colleges have only recently become interested in enrollment management as access for their current and potential students has expanded beyond the boundaries of their campus. Today, students who want to attend college have many more options than attending the local community college or moving away to a four-year institution. These options allow students to take classes on-line and in a variety of other delivery methods, providing other options to access that allow students to fit education into their schedule and not have to work it around the college's courses listings.

Enrollment management initiatives, formerly only conducted at four-year colleges, are increasingly being adopted at the community college. Community colleges are beginning to invest in efforts to understand why students enroll at their colleges and what encourages them to stay until graduation. Developing an enrollment management plan is an endeavor that requires institutional commitment and collaboration with many offices. This research seeks to determine the components of successful enrollment management initiatives. To begin to understand this, the following chapter will investigate a) the growth of community colleges, b) their history, c) define strategic enrollment management, d) how to implement an enrollment management plan, e) define some of the common structures and partnerships of enrollment management, f) explore



institutional commitment, and g) how to plan and establish goals for enrollment management.

### Growth of Community Colleges

Community colleges are the largest provider of higher education in the U.S.; they enroll 6.8 million students in credit courses and offer degrees and certificates to almost 1 million students annually (AACC, 2010). Estimates indicate that community colleges may enroll an additional 3 million students by the year 2015 resulting in a 46% increase in enrollment (Boulard, 2004). This enrollment increase is projected to occur for two reasons: a) the rapid decline in economic conditions and b) an increase in high school graduates over the next decade. These students will enroll to take advantage of the specialized training that allows for immediate workforce placement opportunities and the affordability of obtaining a two-year degree prior to transferring to a four-year institution (Boulard, 2004).

### *Community College Funding*

In the last twenty years, community colleges have experienced a higher demand for their programs and services. This has not kept pace with state funding. In the 1980s community colleges overall share of funding decreased from one-half to slightly more than one-third of community college budgets. In the 1990s, community colleges realized a decrease from 75% to 64%. Making up the difference in the resources is increased support from local and federal grants (AACC, 2009; Schmidt, 1999).

Indicators that are more contemporary reflect that community colleges will continue to face reductions in their appropriations. Of all the various sectors of education (including elementary and secondary schools) community colleges experienced the

biggest one-year drop in state appropriations from 2007 to 2008 (Selingo, 2008). These constraints in resources have forced community colleges to become more creative in maximizing their existing resources. As community colleges continue to do more with less while enrolling more students from an increasingly diverse population, they are finding a greater need to streamline their mission and goals. The evolving demographic profile will reflect an increased diversity and will represent a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. This diverse demographic creates new challenges for colleges as they seek to meet students' needs. To meet these new challenges, it has become imperative that community colleges implement an enrollment management plan. Creating an enrollment management plan has been instrumental in resolving many of the challenges community colleges have faced (Simmons, 2007).

#### History of Enrollment Management

The concept of enrollment management began in the 1970s when those in the higher education foray realized the Baby Boom population was diminishing and an enrollment crisis was imminent (Black, 2001). It was during this time that Boston College was competing to increase their enrollment. During this crisis, Jack Maguire, the dean of admissions at the college, became the first on record to use the term "enrollment management" in a public document. Dean Maguire described enrollment management as a "process that brings together often disparate functions having to do with recruiting, funding, tracking, retaining, and replacing students as they move toward, within, and away from the university" (Kirp, 2003).

In the 1970s and 1980s, in contrast to four-year colleges and universities, community colleges experienced a high demand in their student enrollment. Specifically,

in 1979 the number of 18-year olds peaked at 4.3 million (NCES, 1995). After this boom, community colleges expected a decline in their enrollment. Instead, they experienced an enrollment increase due to an influx of non-traditional students. These non-traditional students included minority students, adult learners, and women (Phillipe, 2000). This new mix of students resulted in an increase in enrollment for community colleges. The community college population grew from 4.5 million students to 5.2 million students, an increase of over 15% (NCES, 1998). An analysis of this enrollment revealed several trends:

1. the mean age of students was 31 when it had previously been 27
2. one-half of the students enrolled full-time in the 1970s while one-third of the students enrolled full-time by the mid-80s
3. the percentage of women enrolled in community colleges surpassed men by 1991 at 55% of the total student population
4. minority enrollment represented 25% of community college enrollment as compared to 20% in the late 1970s (Cohen & Brawer, 1996)

Just a few years later, however, enrollment began to decline, representing only a 3.4% enrollment growth (NCES, 1998). Between the years of 1990 and 1997, community college enrollment only increased by 180,000 students or 3.4% (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). The growth experienced by community colleges in the 1980s by enrolling a more diverse student population began to stabilize and created a need to look at implementing strategic enrollment management planning to increase community college enrollment, to enhance student retention and persistence, and to creatively utilize college resources.

### Strategic Enrollment Management Defined

There are many definitions of enrollment management. Defined broadly, it includes all college efforts to manage the size and nature of their enrollment to meet their goals (Clagett, 1995; Penn, 1999). Marguerite Dennis (1998) described enrollment management as both an art and a science. She stated that success is dependent on a combination of both a good system and good people. She stated, “enrollment management, at its best, cuts across institutional lines, and demands that turf battles be kept to a minimum” (p.11). Dolence took the definition of enrollment management further by defining “strategic” enrollment management. He defined strategic enrollment management as a “comprehensive process designed to help an institution achieve and maintain the optimum recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of students” (p.8).

### Implementing Enrollment Management

Initiating an effort of this magnitude typically takes several years to implement. The first years are devoted to developing the institutional approach to enrollment management, building institutional commitment, and creating a team to carry out the plan’s strategies. After developing the approach, colleges are involved in the integration of efforts and implementation of the strategies. The literature available about enrollment management outlines three necessary components when beginning an effort of this magnitude. First, there are some typical organizational structures commonly utilized when initiating this effort on a community college campus. Second, some key campus partnerships are essential when developing an enrollment management team. Finally, implementing an enrollment management plan requires institutional commitment,

planning and goal establishment, and evaluation of the success of enrollment management (Barnes, 1993; Dennis, 1998; Hossler, 1985).

#### Strategic Enrollment Management Organization Structures

Jones (2003) said, “Enrollment management professionals should expect one constant—more change in the future of enrollment management and higher education” (p. 43). If a community college engages in enrollment management at all, it will be uniquely applied-- no universal application exists. Likewise, enrollment management organizational structures vary across institutions. The alignment of enrollment management systems on campuses has evolved because every institution has a different administrative and faculty organization. Its very nature ensures that enrollment management varies among colleges as colleges design enrollment management plans that fit their recruitment and retention goals. Enrollment management structures have begun to garner more attention as colleges look to more experienced structures when initiating this effort.

Kemerer, Baldrige, & Green (1982) identified four structures for organizing and coordinating a college’s enrollment management movement: a) the enrollment management committee, b) the enrollment management coordinator, c) the enrollment management matrix, and d) the enrollment management division. These structures represent a continuum in the level of reorganization required when planning efforts begin. At one end of the continuum is a committee structure while at the other end is an entire division devoted to enrollment management. While most colleges will utilize one of these designs, some colleges’ structure themselves in more of a hybrid version of several of these. Although, the literature does not explain which structure is most

recommended, it does indicate some of the benefits and pitfalls of each. Following is an explanation of the four enrollment management structures Kemerer, Baldrige, & Green (1982) have described.

#### *Enrollment Management Committee*

The enrollment management committee involves representatives from the college to include faculty, administrators, and students. A large benefit of this design is that it garners college-wide understanding about marketing and recruitment while building institutional support for the enrollment management initiative (Hossler, 1990). This structure also provides improved communication and understanding of enrollment issues across the campus. For this to work it should reflect a cross-section of campus representation. Although an inexpensive way of addressing enrollment concerns, it usually lacks any authority to make change occur.

#### *Enrollment Management Coordinator*

Another structure has a position of enrollment management coordinator at the college. The person filling the coordinator role is usually an effective facilitator with a great deal of credibility with the constituents who affect college-wide change. The coordinator will work with unit leaders to develop goals, enrollment plans, and coordinate an effort to achieve them. One of the disadvantages of this approach is that the person who leads the enrollment management charge may not have the authority to make decisions regarding enrollment issues. They may instead have to report to senior leadership who is the authorizing body to approve the enrollment management initiatives (Hossler, 1990). In public institutions, the enrollment manager reports to the chief

academic officer in 41% of colleges and the chief student affairs officer in 24% of colleges (Wolff & Bryant, 1999).

#### *Enrollment Management Matrix*

The enrollment management matrix is another structure utilized. In this approach, an existing college vice president is charged with leading enrollment management initiatives. This design does not require a shift in college reporting structures and has the advantage of taking enrollment issues to the senior leadership. This organization creates the platform necessary to effect change where enrollment issues are concerned because senior leadership is integral in the effort (Hossler, 1990). In this structure, offices responsible for enrollment will be grouped together in modules that can work together to establish enrollment management goals. This can be a very practical approach, but there may be some units that are more likely to follow this direction than others. One disadvantage is that faculty members, for example, may be less likely to follow directives from someone outside the academic division.

#### *Enrollment Management Division*

Creation of an enrollment management division is the most radical approach even though it is the most centralized of all structures. In this design, a vice president takes the lead with the enrollment management effort and leads all the key departments that impact enrollment. Ideally, the enrollment management division receives high administrative support from the president who should be a strong advocate of this organizational approach. One benefit of this is the unification of all departments responsible for influencing enrollment. Another benefit is that the vice president has the authority to implement identified strategies and require the cooperation of all units.

## Campus Partnerships in Enrollment Management

Regardless of which enrollment management structure the community college implements, studies about enrollment management have focused on what offices needed to be around the table when enrollment planning begins. Maguire (1976) called this the “grand design.” Since enrollment management provides a linkage between the colleges a student chooses to attend, how the student acclimates into that college and whether or not the student persists at the college, ridding the college of the silo mentality is essential. Offices such as admissions, financial aid, and retention may be perceived as independent of one another, but they need to work together for common integrated goals when enrollment management planning occurs (Britz, 1998). The following section details which offices are crucial to enrollment management planning and how the committee would be structured on college campuses (Appendix A). These offices include marketing, recruitment, academic programs, financial aid, admissions, academic advising, first-year experience, learning assistance centers, institutional research and retention.

### *Marketing*

Community college students are diverse in terms of ethnicity, academic abilities, age groups, and career goals. These students enroll in community colleges with varying expectations and aspirations (Wakstein, 1987). It is a complex effort to continually recruit and market to community college students. It is far more profitable to retain the students who do enroll than to continually engage in student recruitment and marketing efforts (Lane, 2002).

Effective marketing requires successful implementation of the four “Ps”—product, price, place, and promotion (Bryant, 1989). Community colleges do three of these very



well. Community colleges have successfully marketed their *product*: job training, economical two-year education, community enrichment, life-long learning programs, and literacy education. In addition, they also effectively advertise the affordability of their tuition rates—their *price*. Community colleges' marketing efforts are able to capitalize on their lower tuition rates in comparison with those of other educational institutions. Finally, they have also effectively marketed their *place*. Students are able to enroll in courses that are close in proximity to where they work and live, making the choice to attend often an easy one. What community colleges have often neglected to engage in, however, is the art of *promotion*.

Community college promotion is often difficult because of their open access philosophy. Often these aspects are not synonymous with high quality programs and can be perceived as low cost and low quality. Marketing efforts should closely align with the college's enrollment management plan because they are so integral to student enrollment. Marketing efforts should promote why community colleges should be a student's first choice. Promotion of the college should emphasize the variety of degree and course options, job placement rates, and student contact with highly qualified faculty, small class sizes, efficient staff, and quality instruction (Bryant, 1989).

### *Recruitment*

When it comes to college enrollment, students have many choices. Colleges understand this and use extensive resources to convince students their college is the best fit. Recruiting at community colleges is different from any other type of higher education market. Instead of reaching out to students to tell them how they would be an asset to the institution, community colleges demonstrate to students how they strive to meet their

educational needs (Hossler, 1984). Effective enrollment managers respond to the changing conditions of the current marketplace equipped with sufficient data to enable them to identify potential markets (Hossler, 1986; Wolff & Bryant, 1999). Community college recruiters work in these markets to inform, motivate, and encourage student attendance at the college. Working in tandem with the college's enrollment management team allows recruiters to have information regarding the number and type of students targeted for enrollment.

### *Academic Programs*

The purpose of enrollment management planning is to enroll and retain students at the college. An enrollment management plan should include the academic division in its work. There are two reasons why this is critical. The first is that the academic product is what is most attractive to students as they decide to enroll. Secondly, the college's academic offerings are what allow them to maintain their ability to compete with the other colleges. Dolence (1993) has said:

An institution's academic program is inexorably co-dependent on enrollment management. The quality of the academic program can only be developed and maintained in a stable enrollment environment, and stable enrollments are only possible through sound planning, development, and management of academic programs. The alignment of institutional academic policies with SEM (strategic enrollment management) goals and objectives is essential to successfully structuring the SEM process (p. 9).

Students who are college-bound have unlimited choices in where to enroll. There is also increasing competition with professional organizations who offer conferences,

workshops, and courses for working adults. In addition to these modes of delivery, community colleges are faced with competition from the e-learning initiative. E-learning is becoming a popular method of taking courses for students because it is largely conducted electronically allowing students to have more flexibility in when and how they take their courses. For students who choose not to leave home for college, the community college is no longer the only enrollment option (Dolence, 1993; Smith, 1985).

### *Financial Aid*

Financial aid has become an important mechanism in an enrollment management plan. Historically financial aid exists to assist students with college funding and allowing them to attend. Institutions must understand their awarding policies and evaluate whether their practices enhance or hinder enrollments and student persistence (Hossler, 1984; Hossler & Bean, 1990; Pardieck & Thomas, 1991). As institutions progress toward an enrollment management environment, it is necessary for the role of financial aid to change. Policies and procedures governing aid distribution must be analyzed to determine their impact on enrollment and retention. To become more strategic, the role of the financial aid administration must shift to include research, process development, and financial aid program implementation (Pardieck & Thomas, 1991).

### *Admissions, Records, and the Registrar*

When all goes well, the work of the admissions office and the college registrar may go largely unnoticed to the student body (Gunn & Backes, 1992). However, this office is responsible for many college-wide functions including class schedules, catalog production, the academic calendar, and enforcing state and federal guidelines. In addition to these college functions, the admissions office provides many services for students:

transcript evaluations, graduation certifications, degree audits, and course registration. These services ensure students have contact with this office throughout their enrollment in the community college.

The admissions office and the registrar are integral to the enrollment management team because of their role in student retention. Providing unobtrusive services to students is essential to their continued enrollment and removes any barriers that may lead to frustration. Superior customer service and continual assessment of registration processes is necessary as inadequate services affect the college's image and student satisfaction (DeCristoforo, 1996; Gunn & Backes, 1992).

#### *Academic Advising and the Faculty*

An enrollment management effort on a community college campus is not complete without faculty involvement. One of the necessary components of enrollment management is garnering faculty support and ensuring they understand the value of recruiting students and retaining those who enroll. Faculty involvement as part of the college's enrollment management effort allows them to have information about why students enroll, why students are leaving, and why students are dissatisfied with aspects of their educational experience. This information is crucial to the faculty member's role in the classroom and being armed with this information will foster an understanding of enrollment decisions (Thielman, 2004).

In addition to faculty involvement, many enrollment management plans include an aspect of academic advising. Faculty contact is an essential part of academic advising. Students who seek out a faculty member for advising expect someone who is caring, has the ability to answer questions about course requirements, and has a genuine interest in

their success (Hossler & Bean, 1990). Faculty involvement greatly influences student persistence (Shevawn & Bean, 1995). Students who are able to interact with their faculty in a social capacity are more likely to successfully integrate into their college. In addition, successful academic advising is linked to improved retention and graduation rates (Hossler, 1984; Thomas, 1990; Tuttle, 2000). An effective academic advising model teaches students how to be successful in college and goes beyond the administrative task of class selection. Students who utilize academic advising gain a great understanding about how their education fits in with their lives and are more likely to remain enrolled (Bean, 1990; Hossler, 1984; Thomas, 1990; Tuttle, 2000).

#### *First-Year Experience Orientation Programs*

Orientation programs assist with the transition into college from the student's previous environment to promote student success. Orientation programs are proven to successfully retain students because they introduce the college campus and its personnel (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). These programs assist students in their adjustment into college. A student should exit an orientation program with an understanding of what it means to be a successful student both academically and socially. Orientation programs should help students identify support services; introduce them to the culture of the college and the policies and procedures that ensure success.

#### *Learning Assistance Centers/Tutoring*

An enrollment management plan at a community college should include the learning assistance or tutoring center (Hossler & Bean, 1990). The mission of the community college is to enroll all students, regardless of their level of college preparedness. Academic under- preparedness, however, is a leading cause of student

attrition (Dennis, 1998). Many students enroll in college prepared for the rigor of the coursework, while some students need additional assistance such as developmental courses, tutoring, and learning labs. Enrollment managers should track the success of the students engaging in these activities so they have accurate data on those who succeed and those who fail. Having this data will allow for data-driven decision making on what programs students need to have a successful experience at the college. A connection between the college tutoring center and enrollment management should be a strong one.

### *Institutional Research*

Effectively managing enrollments requires large amounts of data, both internal and external to the college. To this end, the enrollment management office must have a high priority level with the office of institutional research and the authority to request assistance and data. Essential data such as market segments, admissions data, labor trends, birth rates, financial aid awarding information, yield ratios, cohort flows, recruitment activities, and data regarding student outcomes are all necessary to make informed planning decisions. In addition, data collected from the students regarding their satisfaction, their characteristics, opinions, and the activities they engage in on campus are all integral to understanding student enrollment and retention (Beeler, 1989; Hossler, 1986). Institutional researchers are critical to the enrollment management process, not only do they collect the data necessary to make informed decisions they also interpret enrollment trends (Hossler & Bean, 1990).

### *Retention*

College marketing and recruitment efforts are designed to increase institutional enrollment, but these efforts are useless if the students are not retained (Krotseng, 1989).

In 1999, the community college attrition rate for students continuing to their second year of college was 46%, the highest of any type of higher education institution (Levitz, Noel, & Richter, 1999). Student retention efforts are at the forefront of concern as colleges begin to understand the necessity of keeping the students they have (Dolence, 1991; Tichenor & Cosgrove, 1991). A community college enrollment management plan should incorporate retention strategies in addition to recruitment strategies. The open access quality indicative of community colleges makes retention efforts more complex than at 4-year colleges. Dennis (1998) has said the following regarding student retention and how crucial it is to enrollment management, “retention is a greater measure of a school’s success than enrollment since enrolling in college, or university is just the first step toward fulfilling academic objectives” (pg.78).

Enrollment managers must understand the characteristics of the students who remain enrolled at their college. Once these characteristics are identified, retention efforts can be incorporated into the college’s enrollment management plan and institutionalized into daily processes. An enrollment management plan should outline the college’s strengths and conduct an environmental scan for potential threats. These threats should convert into opportunities for the college and its student body (Krotseng, 1989).

#### Institutional Commitment

Effective college leadership is critical to the implementation of an enrollment management plan (Dennis, 1998). One of the keys to successful implementation of an enrollment management initiative is the institutional commitment established by the college leadership. Successful implementation of an enrollment management plan requires that the entire college have a role and an investment in this effort (Hossler,

1985). Campus offices such as student marketing/recruitment, pricing and financial aid, academic and career advising, academic assistance programs, institutional research, orientation, retention, and student services should all have a role in the planning and implementation of enrollment management on campus.

Ideally, the college president should promote this effort and require college-wide cooperation (Barnes, 1993). In addition to college administration, the role of the academic division is integral to enrollment management. The academic deans, department chairs, and faculty are crucial to successful plan implementation. With such campus-wide involvement, the ability to focus on each function's importance is enhanced. Kemerer (1984) reminds us,

Blaming the office of admissions, the vice president, or president for enrollment problems is shortsighted and counterproductive. Without involvement by everyone, the flow of students will not remain stable. Without students, academic programs will wither and die, and professors become unemployed. (p. 29).

#### Planning and Goal Establishment

As community colleges continue to serve diverse populations, their mission, goals, and vision need to evolve as well. This requires a fluid planning process, one that should be evaluated at regular intervals. Janet Ward (2005) stated the following:

Just as every institution has a mission statement that expresses their purpose, there needs to be a roadmap that shows where you have come from, where you are, and where you are going. The enrollment plan serves as the roadmap for achieving specific institutional goals, typically connect to student body size,



enrollment mix, and revenue while also providing specific indicators on the effectiveness of the learning environment (p.7).

Michael Dolence (1993) suggested stabilizing college enrollments required reversing a declining enrollment trend, controlling enrollment growth, and/or refining fluctuations in enrollment in order to stabilize college finances. He also suggested this is best accomplished in collaboration with academic departments to address their individual enrollment needs. When focusing attention on the linkage to the academic programs, Dolence suggested aligning activities like strategic planning, program reviews, budget preparation, and academic master plans will increase the quality and retention rates.

To stabilize enrollments, Dolence (1993) suggested enrollment and revenue planning must happen simultaneously. He suggested that often higher education looks to college expenditures of the budget to solve financial problems. Instead, budget planning should be linked to enrollment planning to avoid potential financial imbalances. He suggests working to optimize college resources and looking beyond the budget to accomplish this. Interestingly enough, Dolence contends every college in the country underutilizes their resources. He suggests addressing resource issues such as employee growth, redirecting employees, employee efforts, and investigating maximizing the potential of the campus information system.

Further, Dolence (1993) suggested taking a hard look at the college's services and overall operations. He said that improving services to repair misguided, unnecessary, and unwanted services colleges provide to their students is one step in reviewing college operations. Engaging in enrollment management practices leads to improved services such as shortened response time, increased satisfaction, and fewer administrative

processes. An evaluation of all strategies and tactics colleges use is an integral function of an enrollment management plan. A successful enrollment manager gathers data to assess which activities to continue and which ones to discontinue.

### Enrollment Management Goals

While enrollment management implementation may look different at each institution, the goals of an enrollment management initiative at each college have shown several common denominators. Enrollment management goals are designed to fulfill the college's mission and to meet the educational goals of the community college student (Dolence, 1991). These goals are achieved by: a) establishing clear goals for the number of enrolled students needed, b) promoting academic success by improving access, retention, transition into college, and graduation rates c) determining and achieving the college's ideal enrollment, d) delivering effective programs to the students, e) effective financial planning, f) increasing efficiency of the organization, g) creating an environment where decisions are data-based and grounded in research, and h) establishing a college environment where all resources are aligned toward a common mission.

### Evaluation of an Enrollment Management Plan

Like any plan essential to a college, the enrollment management plan is not designed to be created then placed in the college archives. Instead, it is designed to be revisited, refined, and enhanced. Dolence (1991) has suggested the purpose of the evaluation process is to determine its value, to assist with institutional policy decisions, and to provide additional information about the program. Enrollment management planning should encompass longitudinal student tracking systems and performance

monitoring indicators covering each stage of the student's involvement with the college (Clagett & Kerr, 1994). In addition, an environmental scanning process and feedback from faculty, staff, and students allows for continuous evaluation of the college's enrollment management effort.

Enrollment management evaluation allows a college to track enrollment trends, identify areas of institutional understanding that are weak, and promote continuous plan improvement (Clagett & Kerr, 1994). Evaluation is crucial to enrollment management success and vitally necessary to make decisions about where to allocate human and financial resources (Dolence, 1991). Criteria for evaluating the college's plan should be implemented at the time of strategy formulation. Recommended strategies should be written with measurable goals, and the process must be held accountable for the accomplishment of those goals. Strategy implementation must be tracked and monitored and the results distributed and discussed (Dolence, Miyahara, Grajeda, & Rapp, 1987). Dolence (1996) asserted that the goal of evaluating strategies and tactics should be part of any plan. Enrollment managers must be able to ascertain which strategies, tactics, and activities should continue and which should be discontinued or modified.

One very important aspect of evaluating a college's enrollment management plan is to have a clear definition of the student population. At community colleges, in particular, students' have varying goals. To define retention goals narrowly, may indicate the college has a very low retention rate when in fact students may be achieving their own goals by taking one or two classes to enter the workforce. Tichenor and Cosgrove (1991) argue that non-degree students who have achieved their educational goals are a success and should be counted as such.

## Conclusion

While there are no prescribed methods of initiating an enrollment management effort in the community college setting, there are several concepts that emerge when implementation of a plan commences. The first is that there are some structures that most colleges use to build their enrollment management organization: a) the enrollment management committee, b) the enrollment management coordinator c) the enrollment management matrix, and d) the enrollment management division. These four structures can be combined to fit the needs of the college. Second, the composition of an enrollment management planning team is stronger when they include cross-campus functions and leadership. Having several key areas represented on the team ensures progress toward the goals of the enrollment management plan. Third, the college leadership must communicate the priority of the enrollment management charge clearly to the college community (Barnes, 1993; Penn, 1999).

Community college enrollment management is a relatively new concept. Colleges often choose to engage in this process when they find their enrollment and retention percentages decrease. While the literature offers suggestions on how to structure an enrollment management unit and what offices to bring together in this effort, it does not clearly depict what successful practices have occurred on a community college campus. The purpose of this research is to study what has been successful (and unsuccessful) and offer a framework for necessary components in enrollment management plans. This should assist community colleges as they plan to initiate enrollment management on their campuses. Dennis (1998) effectively summarized what to expect when implementing an enrollment management plan. She stated, “The only thing we can be certain of in

developing enrollment and retention programs is that they will and should be works in progress, with the only constant being the need to recognize, appreciate, and embrace change (p.5).”

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Enrollment management is a growing effort on community college campuses to understand student enrollment and student retention through graduation. Community colleges are not as accustomed to having to actively recruit students onto their campuses as four-year institutions are. Recruitment of students is nothing new to four-year colleges, but community colleges have prospered without extensive recruitment because they are embedded in their community and because of their affordability. Students have several more enrollment options and it is important for community colleges to initiate enrollment management planning so they can understand why students enroll in their college, how they can increase enrollment, and how they encourage students to persist until graduation (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Community colleges are starting to engage in enrollment management initiatives to gain control over their enrollment. This research studied community colleges that have initiated enrollment management plans and have indicated successful enrollment increases because of this effort. This work identified the critical components necessary for successful enrollment management planning at community colleges across the U.S.

#### Research Design

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research because it is descriptive and tells a story about a phenomenon. Merriam (1998) stated that “in contrast to quantitative research, which takes apart a phenomenon to examine component parts (which become the variables of the study), qualitative research can reveal how all the

parts work together to form a whole” (p. 6). The research questions in this study will be addressed through qualitative methods by using a multiple case study.

Case studies are classified as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (Merriam, 1998). Particularistic means that case studies focus on a particular phenomenon and the way particular groups of people confront specific problems. Descriptive means that the result of the research provides a rich, thick description. In contrast, quantitative research, which uses numbers to answer a question, qualitative case studies present data by using quotes, artifacts, and examples to tell a story about a phenomenon. Merriam (1998) defines case studies as heuristic because they “illuminate the readers understanding of the phenomenon” (p. 30) and can either bring about a new discovery, confirm what is already known or extend the reader’s experience of the phenomenon. Using the case study for this research was the most effective method of answering the study’s research questions. The results of this case study allowed for a greater understanding of how three community colleges implemented their enrollment management plan and some of the accomplishments and challenges they have experienced.

Stake (1995) suggested case studies are not about the ability to generalize, but instead to particularize. Researchers study a single case and come to know it on an in-depth level. Case study researchers’ assume the role of “interpreter in the field” not only to observe the case, but who records objectively what is happening and examines its meaning.

### Research Questions

This research focused on answering three research questions at each of the sites visited. These questions are as follows:

1. What is the focus of the college's enrollment management plan (recruitment, retention, managing enrollment) and how is the implementation of this effort structured (committee, workgroup)?
2. What have been some of the successful and unsuccessful practices of the plan?
3. Does the college have a process for evaluating the enrollment management plan? If so, how were the steps determined? If not, how will the success of the plan be measured?

### Site Selection

The unit of analysis for this study was four community colleges selected to participate. Three participated in the research study while one college served as a pilot institution. The sites for this study were selected using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling "focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (Patton, 2002, p. 233).

The researcher asked the question, "who is knowledgeable about community college enrollment management?" To identify rich cases for this study, the researcher contacted a national organization specializing in enrollment management practices. She was directed to an individual who is an expert in assisting colleges with enrollment management concerns and has written many articles on the subject. After describing the study to the informant, he provided the researcher with the names of several colleges who



met the following two criteria: a) the college has an enrollment management committee, and b) the college has developed an enrollment management plan.

The researcher contacted the enrollment managers suggested by the expert via email and requested a telephone meeting to discuss community college enrollment management. At the conclusion of the conversation, and if the college appeared to be a fit for this study, the researcher asked if the college would be interested and willing to be a site for this study and if they could offer suggestions for any other community college enrollment managers who might be a resource to contact for this research. Using this sampling technique allowed the researcher to seek out examples of the enrollment management phenomenon. The colleges that were studied for this research are examples of community colleges that have enrollment management plans and committees. Criteria for appropriate fit for this study included having an enrollment management plan and having an active enrollment management committee on campus. To protect the identity and provide anonymity, the researcher assigned each college a pseudonym.

### Pilot Study

There are several reasons to conduct a pilot study prior to the commencement of the research study: a) determining the validity of the interview questions, b) correcting any issues that may occur with the research protocols, and c) allowing the researcher to increase his or her experience in conducting research. The first reason is to ensure that all interview questions focus on the agenda of the research (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). The researcher used the pilot study to ensure that the questions being asked were relevant to the study and answered the research questions. Another advantage of conducting a pilot study is that it gave the researcher advance warning where the main research may fail,

where protocols may not be followed, or whether protocols are too complicated or inappropriate (De Vaus, 1993). The researcher was able to ascertain through the pilot whether the data collection methods were reasonable. Concerns such as planning for travel, allowing enough time to transcribe data prior to visiting another site, and whether or not the protocols could be readily followed were clarified as the pilot was conducted. Finally, since the researcher in this study was a novice, the pilot allowed her to gain additional experience and develop a comfort level with conducting qualitative research (Holloway, 1997).

For the current research, one college served as the pilot institution. Hart Community College is a public two-year college and enrolls approximately 2300 students annually. This college is located in the southern part of the U.S. and serves a rural student population. This college engages in enrollment management efforts by implementing an enrollment management plan. They also employ an enrollment manager whose role it is to manage their plan. This college agreed to host the researcher and discuss their enrollment management effort. This college was selected to serve as the pilot institution because of its geographic proximity to the researcher.

The researcher established an interview and focus group protocol. The researcher visited the pilot site prior to beginning her formal research. At the pilot site, the researcher used the same research format as those participating in the formal research. The format was: a) review the college's documents, b) interview the college's enrollment manager using the interview protocol, and c) conduct a focus group with the enrollment management committee using a predetermined protocol. The purpose of this pilot study was to ensure the questions asked at each community college were adequate and

appropriate to the study's research questions. After the pilot study was conducted, the researcher determined the questions were appropriate to answer the research questions and made no changes to the protocol.

The pilot college was selected from among the four colleges that agreed to host the researcher. This institution was selected because it is geographically closer to the researcher than the other colleges who agreed to participate. The researcher piloted the protocols designed for this study at this institution to ensure that the questions were concise and reached the goals of the research. Upon completion of study at the pilot institution, the researcher evaluated the results of the collected data and ensured that the design of the study was the most effective for the research questions in this study.

#### Participants

Three community colleges participated in the formal study. Each community college has engaged in enrollment management planning and has a well-established enrollment management committee who actively meets to discuss enrollment issues and enrollment plan implementation. These colleges were willing to share their experiences with the researcher. The colleges are (pseudonyms were used to provide confidentiality): *Gregory Community College* has a student population of 15,000 and is classified as a large, urban-serving community college. This college is a single campus college and is located in the midwestern part of the U.S.

*Pearce Community College* has a population of 6001 and is a single campus institution with two satellite centers. This college is classified as a small, urban-serving community college. This college is located in the midwestern part of the U.S.

*Reese Community College* has a student population of 8067 and is classified as a small, suburban-serving community college. This college is a single campus college and is located in the northwestern part of the U.S.

#### Sequence of Data Collection

The researcher followed a specific data collection protocol at each community college. The researcher secured permission protocols from each college prior to the visit to ensure she complied with all institutional policies (Appendix I). Then, the researcher contacted the community college's enrollment manager to determine an appropriate time to visit the college for data collection and the focus group, and completed any permissions necessary prior to arrival. In addition, when the meeting date was established, the researcher requested college artifacts be sent to her via email for review prior to the planned visit. These artifacts included a copy of the enrollment management plan, meeting minutes, and enrollment trend reports. Upon arrival at the community college, the researcher conducted a one-hour interview with the college's enrollment manager. This interview was audio-recorded. Following this interview, the researcher conducted a focus group with several members of the college's enrollment management committee. This was also audio-recorded. Once these meetings ended, the researcher conducted a follow-up debriefing with the college's enrollment manager to answer any questions that arose during the focus group. The data that were collected at each site visit was analyzed in their entirety upon completion of the visit to that college. The researcher transcribed the data from each visit after it occurred and prior to the next site visit.

### Interview Process

The researcher conducted one extensive interview with each college's enrollment manager upon arriving at the college. The researcher followed a pre-established interview protocol that had been modified upon completion of the research's pilot study (Appendix D). The interview questions were structured using an 'interview guide approach' (Patton, 2002). The questions were put in an outlined format prior to the interview to ensure that all topics were covered. Using this approach, the interviewer was free to ask the respondent to expand and illuminate further on any topic. These interview questions were semi-structured, open-ended, and focused on their college's enrollment management initiative. The researcher used Creswell's (1994) recommendations as a guide to create the interview protocol. The audio-recorded interview was comprised of 15 questions and lasted approximately one hour. At the end of the visit and prior to departing from the college, the researcher had a follow-up interview with the enrollment manager to ask any questions that arose during the data collection.

The goal of the interview with the enrollment manager was to discover information about the college's enrollment management plan and planning process. In addition, the researcher asked questions regarding the original intent of designing an enrollment management plan. Questions such as "why did your college develop an enrollment management plan?" and "define what your goals were in developing the plan (recruitment, retention, managing students)?" helped the researcher understand why the college chose to implement their plan. Several other questions allowed the researcher to understand what aspects of their plan had been successful. Questions such as "do you consider your enrollment management plan a success and why?" and "what are some of

the best practices you think are unique to your plan?” were designed to answer the study’s research questions of “what have been successful and unsuccessful practices of the plan?” and “how is the success of your plan measured?”

Stake (1995) recommended that within a few hours of the interview, the researcher should prepare a written account of the session that includes the key ideas. He suggests that capturing the interview word for word is of little importance; however, offering the written account to the respondent for verification is essential. According to Stake, there are two ways a researcher finds new meaning in cases. The first way is through direct interpretation of individual cases and the second is through aggregation of multiple cases until something can be concluded about them as a class.

Stake (1995) suggests that the search for meaning is often a search for patterns in the cases. Sometimes significant meaning can be found in a single instance, but usually important meanings are found when themes appear repeatedly in the data. Categorical aggregation and direct interpretation of the data will depend on the search for patterns. Sometimes the patterns are known in advance as the research questions were developed, but in other instances unexpected patterns emerge from the analysis. For this study, themes were considered relevant when they appeared repeatedly throughout the data rather than if they appeared in a single instance.

Patton (2002) offers some recommendations about sequencing of interview questions to enhance the effectiveness of the interview. Patton suggests beginning an interview with questions about non-controversial behavior because these questions are easy to answer and encourage the respondent to talk descriptively. Once the respondents are more at ease and have answered the initial questions, the inquiry can move to

questions requiring respondent opinion. Patton believes that questions about the present are much easier for respondents to answer than questions about the past and those that require speculation about the future. Patton recommends asking questions about the future only after some questions about the present and past have been answered that offer a baseline. Further, Patton cautions the interviewer on the use of demographic questions. He recommends limiting them as much as possible, but for those necessary to the study the researcher should incorporate them throughout the interview so as not to bore the respondent.

### Focus Groups

Following the interview with the enrollment manager, the researcher conducted a focus group interview with members of the enrollment management team. While the focus group session is an interview, there are some differences. Instead of conducting one-on-one interviews with members of the enrollment management team at the community colleges, conducting a focus group with the committee allowed some different data to emerge. In focus groups, participants hear each other's comments and are allowed to make additional responses beyond their own. However, participants need not agree or disagree with their colleagues. According to Patton (2002), the objective of a focus group is to get high-quality data in a social setting where people can consider their own views in the context of other participants' views. This method is different from an individual interview because it allows participants to influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the course of the discussion (Patton, 2002).

A focus group protocol was established using Patton's (2002) interview guide recommendations (Appendix E). In addition, each focus group participant was given an

*Informed Consent Form* (Appendix B) and a *Demographic Information Sheet* (Appendix C) to complete prior to the meeting. The demographic sheet was designed to answer questions such as “how long have you been with the college?” and “how were you selected to participate on the enrollment management committee?” During the focus group, the researcher gained valuable insight into how the college’s enrollment management process had evolved and learned the future direction of their enrollment management planning.

The purpose of the focus group was to understand and collect data using the group’s words and actions as they answered questions regarding their work. The researcher audio-recorded the sessions and took notes about any observations as they occurred. The focus group data was transcribed as soon after each meeting as possible. Understanding the group’s collective perception of their college’s enrollment management effort, provided the researcher a more in-depth understanding of the college’s planning process, goal setting initiatives and how the committee had been able to establish enrollment management as part of the college’s mission and vision.

#### Documents Review

The researcher contacted the enrollment manager at each site to request all documents prior to the site visit. Having access to the college’s documents served the purpose of familiarizing the researcher with the content of the college’s plan and allowed the researcher to begin data analysis of these documents. The documents reviewed for this study included, but were not limited to, enrollment management planning documents, enrollment management meeting minutes, and institutional research information that was relevant to enrollment management planning. The researcher reviewed documents that



were written within the last five years. By reviewing these documents, the researcher was able to compare information provided by other data collection methods, therefore verifying that information.

### Data Analysis

The researcher utilized a concurrent collection approach to the data analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2007). This approach allowed for the opportunity to complete one case analysis prior to collection of another. While no changes were necessary, utilizing this method afforded the ability to make changes in the approach if needed. The researcher reviewed the data for each case once it had been transcribed to identify similar phrases, patterns, and themes. Once data from all colleges had been collected and analyzed, the researcher coded them to identify all emergent themes for all colleges visited.

This study is a multiple case study of three community colleges' enrollment management initiatives. In a comparative case study, there are two stages of analysis, within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. When analyzing data with-in case, each college was treated as an individual and comprehensive case. Collected data from each college was first analyzed to learn as much as possible about each college's enrollment management effort. Once the analysis of each case was completed, the cross-case analysis began.

According to Sharan Merriam (1998), "a qualitative, inductive, multi-case study seeks to build abstractions across cases" (p. 195). Even though each case varied in the individual details, the researcher's goal was to understand and build a general explanation. This explanation ultimately leads to a more "sophisticated descriptions and

more powerful explanations” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 172). In addition to building a general explanation, it is necessary to search for patterns and consistency among the data collected (Stake, 1995). Although meaning can be found by analyzing only one example in a case study, more often the important meanings are found in a consistent reoccurrence among the data. Stake says that categorical aggregation and direct interpretation depend on the search for patterns. Further, the patterns will often be known in advance, drawn from the research questions. In other instances, the patterns will emerge unexpectedly as the data is interpreted and analyzed (Stake, 1995).

### Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a process used with qualitative data. Boyatzis (1998) described this type of analysis as follows: “it is not another qualitative method but a process that can be used with most, if not all, qualitative methods and that allows for the translation of qualitative information into quantitative data, if this is desired by the researcher” (p. 4). Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information. The encoding requires an explicit code. This code may be a list of themes, indicators, and qualifications that are related in some causal way.

Boyatzis (1998) defines a thematic code as one that is comprised of five elements:

1. a label
2. a definition of what the theme concerns
3. a description of how to know when the theme occurs
4. a description of any qualifications or exclusions to the identification of the theme
5. examples, both positive and negative, to eliminate possible confusion when looking for a theme

Once the researcher transcribed the data from the interviews and the focus groups, the data was provided to the respondents for member checking (Appendix J). The researcher used member checking to ensure the data was collected and transcribed correctly and accurately. Once the data had been verified by the respondent, the data was coded using Boyatzis' suggested method. Each code was defined so the researcher would know when it occurred in the transcription (Appendix F). After each transcription was coded, the codes were further developed and categorized into headings (Appendix G). Following this, a codebook was established so that common themes could be identified (Appendix H). This coding occurred first between each case individually then across each of the three other cases.

Once the themes had been established, the researcher used them to draw conclusions regarding the three research questions. To answer the first research question, *what is the focus of the college's enrollment management plan (recruitment, retention, and managing enrollment)? and how is the implementation of this effort structured (committee, workgroup)?* the researcher used responses from all data sources: focus groups, interviews, and the enrollment management documents review. To answer the second research question, *what have been some of the successful and unsuccessful practices of the plan?* the researcher used data from the interviews and focus group because this question was not be easily ascertained from the college's enrollment management plan. To answer the third research question, *does the college have a process for evaluating the enrollment management plan? If so, how were the steps determined? If not, how will the success of the plan be measured?* the researcher relied on the responses in all data collection measures.

## Trustworthiness

The concept of trustworthiness is integral in determining the rigor of qualitative research. Developing clear strategies to maintain the integrity of the research is significant to establish credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Hays & Singh, in press). Researchers use the concept of credibility to determine if a study's outcome makes sense for the qualitative study. Factors such as the data sources used in the study, outlining an account of the researcher's decision-making process, and checking the interpretation of the data with the participants are all paramount in displaying credibility (Hays & Singh, in press; Somekh & Lewin, 2005)

Similar to the concept of reliability in quantitative research, the concept of dependability ensures that a study's findings are similar to other research being conducted on this topic. It is essential that research exhibit consistency of results over a period of time and with varied researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative research, the researcher is a key element. The concept of confirmability is necessary to ensure that the data is a result of the information received from the participants and not compounded by the researcher's bias and experiences. To properly confirm the study's data, the researcher needed to ensure that was reported as authentically as possible. To accomplish this, the researcher transcribed the data then had it verified by the research participant. This ensured researcher bias was not a factor in the data collection process.

In quantitative research, one of the goals is the generalizability of data. In qualitative research, generalizing the results to other work is not the goal. By providing a thorough description of the research process, which includes information about the research setting, the participants involved and the time frame in which the study

occurred, the qualitative researcher is able to offer those in the field the ability to make their own determination if the results can be transferred to their environment (Hays & Singh, in press; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher employed triangulation techniques and the use of extensive journaling and field notes.

### *Triangulation*

Triangulation is a common strategy used in qualitative work that involves using multiple forms of evidence to describe findings (Hays & Singh, in press). The purpose of triangulation is not to demonstrate that different data sources result in essentially the same information, but rather the purpose is to test for consistency in results (Patton, 2002). This research employed three different triangulation techniques: multiple data sources, multiple data collection methods, and the use of an external auditor.

*Multiple data sources.* In this research, there were two primary types of data sources within each case: interview data and physical artifacts. The interview data were crucial to the study, as it provided information that had considerable value regarding enrollment management practices at each college. The physical artifacts were vital because having information such as enrollment management plans and planning documents allowed the researcher to have a more comprehensive understanding of the progress and process of enrollment management at each college (Anderson & Arsenault, 2001).

Triangulation of data sources allowed the researcher to include several participant voices during qualitative research (Hays & Singh, in press). In this research, several community colleges were studied to determine successful strategies in enrollment management. By working with more than one community college, the researcher was

able to consider multiple perspectives of community college enrollment management. In addition to studying multiple community colleges, this research had the benefit of interacting with many different college employees who have served on the enrollment management team, therefore offering a diverse perspective about enrollment management at the community college. These varying perspectives of enrollment management were crucial to developing an understanding of what are successful and unsuccessful practices in employing this on a college campus.

*Multiple data collection methods.* Patton (2003) states that triangulation strengthens research by combining research methods. In this research, triangulation of data collection methods involved several aspects: a) comparing observational data with interview and focus group data; and b) a comparison of what is said in private interviews with what it shared in observation of meetings and focus groups. Using multiple methods of data collection allowed the researcher to illustrate themes by collecting information from multiple sources: the enrollment manager, the enrollment management committee, and written artifacts.

*Expert auditor.* Triangulation in this research was strengthened by the addition of an expert auditor. The expert auditor was selected by the researcher and was not involved in this current study. The expert auditor is a person working in a community college setting and holds the position of vice president of financial and administrative services. In addition, the auditor has experience with qualitative inquiry and was able to review the data transcription and ensure that themes have been accurately reported, analyzed, and no bias has been interjected. The auditor's role in this research was to ensure the strength of

the thematic analysis and to determine whether the research had been completed comprehensively and thoroughly.

### *Reflexive Journaling*

Reflexivity is a necessary part of qualitative research. Being reflexive involves developing self-understanding. During the research, the researcher continually reflected about the origin of her views and how they influenced the current research. In addition to this understanding of self, Patton (2002) encouraged researchers to “find their voice.” A credible voice, one that establishes authority on the topic engages the reader and offers a rich description of the phenomenon. Continuous reflection during this research should allow the reader to gain a clear understanding of the phenomenon of community college enrollment management while trusting the work the researcher conducted to reach those conclusions.

Given that in this instance the researcher also has some experience in enrollment management, it was imperative that journaling occurred as the research progressed. A reflexive journal included thoughts of how the research process affected the researcher. This journal offered a vehicle for the researcher to reflect on the participants, the study, and the data as it affected the researcher professionally and personally. Including data and interpretation, commentaries and reflexive notes, journaling allowed for an ongoing analysis process. This allowed the researcher to include these notes in the data analysis and to have a more complete perspective about each case to share with the reader. By continually analyzing the data as it was collected, it was helpful in allowing the researcher to push through the research and its conclusions (Hays & Singh, in press; Somekh & Lewin, 2005).

### *Field Notes*

The researcher kept field notes containing the description of what has been observed during the research. These notes contained everything the researcher felt was important to note while collecting data and this was helpful in determining how data were collected and why themes were coded in a certain way (Hays & Singh, in press; Patton, 2002). Field notes are descriptive and should be specific notations about what people said, the observer's own feelings, reactions to the experiences, and reflections about what was observed during the research. The researcher collected these field notes by writing in a journal as she collected data and reflected on her research. These notes were transcribed into an electronic file and categorized by the date the note was written. By keeping the notes electronically in a word document, the researcher was able to search for information if it became necessary to do so.

### *Researcher Bias*

As Patton (2002) observed, strength of naturalistic inquiry is the involvement the researcher has with the research. The benefit of being able to intrude on the phenomena being studied, is the personal involvement and the understanding the researcher has of the topic. The polar end of this benefit is the concern about what affect the researcher has on the data collected. Prior to the data collection, the researcher theorized and strategized about the outcome of the research. As things unfolded that were not according to the plan of the research, how did the researcher plan to handle this? A clear ability to balance observation with reflection and maintaining a detachment is necessary in these instances.

In this research about community college enrollment management, the researcher holds the position of enrollment manager at a community college. She has initiated an



enrollment management effort at her own college and continues to manage the committee. Her knowledge about this topic was beneficial as terms and philosophies were discussed in meetings, interviews, and documents. She was familiar with some of the ideas colleges are implementing as part of their planning process.

Her knowledge about community college enrollment management could have been to her disadvantage, however, when ideas were shared that did not coincide with her own work and knowledge about the topic. By using an interview guide and rubrics for the documents analysis, the researcher was able to minimize her bias affecting the data. In addition, the researcher kept a detailed reflexive journal throughout the study. Discussion with various parts of the journal with the external auditor allowed the researcher to be sure that interpretation of the data was fair and unbiased. To further combat the possibility of important themes being ignored or misinterpreted, the researcher used several methods of triangulation, member checking, and an external auditor as data analysis occurred (Patton, 2003).

#### Strengths and Limitations of Case Studies

Yin (2003) has stated that the “case study has long been stereotyped as the weak sibling among social science methods” (p. xiii). While Yin encourages researchers to continue to engage in this form of research, he cautions that the results may be criticized and even underappreciated. As with every method of quantitative or qualitative inquiry, however, there are strengths and limitations of choosing each approach.

#### *Strengths*

Yin (1989) said that case study research allows a researcher to study a real-life event in its natural setting. It also allows researchers to answer the “how” and “why”

questions that occur in a phenomenon. In addition, case study research emphasizes the context of an occurrence by allowing the study of a single subject or small group of subjects. The results of having such a thorough investigation into enrollment management, for example, allows for results that provide a thick description and gives a distinct picture of the research (Yin, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994)

### *Limitations*

There are limitations attributed to case study research regarding subjectivity and ethical considerations. Using this approach of qualitative inquiry relies on personal interpretation of data and is often criticized for its lack of objectivity and rigor. In addition to the question of subjectivity, case study research is not generalizable, is difficult to test for validity, and usually does not offer the ability to problem solve issues that are studied. In contrast to quantitative research, case studies rely on information from a few cases instead of many. Relying on such a small sample may lead to inferring information from what could be circumstance (Yin, 1989).

Ethical considerations are another limitation. In direct contrast with quantitative inquiry, qualitative research relies on personal interpretation of data and information. Conflicts of interest and researcher bias can hinder a study's credibility. The researcher's integrity, prejudices, and/or biases were considered and included in the field notes and explained in the written account of the research as findings were reported (Yin, 1989).

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

*“Your strategic plan DRIVES your enrollment management plan and your enrollment management plan SERVES your strategic plan” —Linda, RCC enrollment manager*

#### Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the study of enrollment management practices at three community colleges in the United States. This study explored the original intention of the enrollment management effort at the college, some of the successes and learning experiences, and how their effort is evaluated. First, each college is presented individually and by using direct quotes where possible to provide rich context that is crucial in qualitative study. Following this discussion, themes from the data are presented by detailing what was learned by collectively reviewing the three cases.

The findings presented in this chapter are separated into five sections: a) a summary of each participating community colleges, b) the focus of their enrollment management plan, c) successes and learning moments in the college’s planning effort, d) evaluation of the plan, and e) the collective profile of the community colleges’ enrollment management planning effort as reflected by the sample population.

#### Participating Community Colleges

Four community colleges were studied for this research. One community college was used as a pilot study; data collected from this site were used to determine the efficiency of the research questions and to determine some baseline for coding the research data. The three participating community colleges varied by size, location in the

United States, and were diverse in their rural-urban nature. The enrollment managers were interviewed, the enrollment management committee participated in a focus group and the colleges provided their enrollment management plans and other planning documents for analysis. The focus group and interview data were transcribed, coded and analyzed to identify emerging themes. As the analysis occurred, it became clear that there were five emerging themes in study. These themes were 1) collaboration, 2) communication, 3) institutional commitment and, 4) enrollment management leadership, and 5) the design of the enrollment management plan. These themes are discussed individually and collectively in this chapter.

The colleges were promised anonymity in order to maintain the integrity of the data. Pseudonyms have been given to each participating community college and were assigned to participants to protect their identity. The participants provided candid insight into their experiences with their college's enrollment management effort.

#### Gregory Community College

Gregory Community College serves 15,000 students each year. This college is considered a large, urban-serving college and is located in the mid-western part of the United States. The college was situated on the corner of what appeared to be a very busy city intersection. The meeting began with a brief introduction with the college's vice president of academic affairs. She wanted her enrollment management team to meet with me without her in the room. I met with the director of enrollment management who escorted me into a conference room. This conference room overlooked their college quad, currently under heavy construction. They were in the process of building an all-glass, three-story student center which will be a place for students to gather. According to the

staff at the time of my visit, students are “all over the place, there is no place for them to go.” This reinforced the committee’s assertion that in the last five years their enrollment has doubled and the college is now responding to the growth.

Six members of the enrollment management committee participated in the focus group. These participants held the following positions at GCC: a) dean of enrollment and associate vice president of student affairs, b) new student orientation transition coordinator, c) director of admissions, d) the registrar, e) director of financial aid, and f) the director of testing and assessment. The group offered candid responses and was cooperative in responding to my questions. Following the focus group, I met with the college’s vice president of academic affairs who provided great insight and history into the college’s planning effort and the future direction of the college.

#### *Focus of the Enrollment Management Plan*

The focus of the college’s enrollment management effort is to recruit, communicate with, and serve the students who enter their college. This became evident during the first question of the focus group. This question was to “define enrollment management at your college.” The answers that this committee provided gave valuable insight into the focus of their college’s effort. One participant defined enrollment management as:

Collaboration from admissions, testing, business services and financial aid in order to get students in the door and then the Registrar’s Office would be the next step, which would be registration. I would also add that customer service is a huge part of enrollment management and making sure students are getting accurate information, so you have the right folks on your front line.

Another participant described enrollment management as a “well-planned and systematic approach to make sure students are able to get into the classes that are most appropriate to them and provides the best services possible.” The enrollment management plan at GCC has evolved over several years. The original intent was to allow the college to be more purposeful in their decision making and to create an environment for the college staff that eliminated as much stress as possible. The college has evolved into an environment that is more electronic in nature and as a result is trying to ensure that students understand deadlines and timelines by strengthening their communication effort. As Sandy, the college’s enrollment manager said:

A whole communication strategy was developed along with the college’s enrollment management plan because that way we felt like we were delivering the right messages at the right time so that people understood what was going on. The more electronic we have become the more important it has become to be more purposeful about the deadlines, about when we are going to pop the new schedule out into the public on the web so we have had to be really diligent about getting those things done on time and in the time we said we were going to. We have been very judicious about making sure we follow our own deadlines. I think we are doing a pretty good job of that, it is not perfect.

During the focus group the committee stressed that having their offices closely situated together allowed for a more collaborative environment:

In the suite we are in, there has been much more collaboration and mindfulness about as things change that communication gets out to as many people as possible. I think that as far as students go, we are doing our best to update our

web as much as possible. That is something the college is trying to do in a major way—putting more and more information out.

The director's position reports to the vice president of the college. According to the Kemerer, Baldrige, and Green model (1982), this college has structured their enrollment management team in the form of the enrollment management division. In this design, the vice president has responsibility for the enrollment management effort. The benefit of this approach is that it receives a high level of administrative and leadership support and offers the authority to make progress because the investment has come from the highest level of authority.

#### *Successful and Unsuccessful Practices of Plan*

All participants were willing to discuss both the successes they have experienced as they implemented their plan and the unsuccessful aspects they have experienced. The recurring themes for successful practices were collaboration and communication, while the recurring themes for unsuccessful practices in implementation were barriers they encountered in implementation of their effort and some missing aspects in the design of their enrollment management plan. The next section first discusses successes then continues with a description of some of the unsuccessful practices including changes for future iterations of their enrollment management process.

#### *Successful Practices*

GCC staff indicated their enrollment management plan has achieved institutional commitment college wide. Said one participant in the focus group, “definitely collaboration and communication have been the two factors in its success and buy-in.”

Their initiative first received support from the President's Cabinet. Next the plan was explained to the counseling and advising group followed by faculty.

*Collaboration.* This team stressed the importance of having all units understand the importance of when peak registration times were and their willingness to work in a unit needing additional resources during those times. Another collaborative event that has helped this college manage their students is their "Welcome Day" event. This event is always held on a Saturday so that as many students as possible can attend. According to Sandy:

We have only had this for 3 years, but I don't know what we did before that. On Welcome Day we get books, process IDs, 7 different things for over 2000 students that I don't know how we would handle it if we didn't have that date. That is something we decided we needed and we have seen the improvement. Those kinds of areas where you are willing to say "we are pretty good, but we can improve by doing this", makes a plan successful because it has some key things built in.

In addition to the notable passion this team exhibits for students and for their enrollment management effort, GCC infuses collaboration throughout their publications as well. Upon review of an announcement of their "Student Success Day" that appeared in their College's view book and several of their program brochures, it was evident this college works as a team to enroll and retain students. One of their initiatives is "GPS". GPS stands for "Goals + Plan = Success". This program has been integrated throughout their college with the intention of retaining their students. This program is highlighted in their marketing materials and is a college-wide effort. Workshops are given the entire day



and cover topics like money management, listening skills, relationships, enhancing technical skills, and understanding the college's degree audit system.

In addition to the Student Success Day, their view book offers new students with the tools they need to get started. Their checklist allows students to have a step-by-step guide to successfully enrolling. This collaboration of efforts allows students to understand not only the admission process, but continues beyond that by explaining the placement test process, how to apply for financial aid, how to register for orientation, when to pay tuition and how students can buy their books. This tool demonstrates the college's collaborative nature and focus on providing consistent information by creating a mechanism that allows students to have a full understanding of the enrollment process.

*Communication.* Communicating both internally and externally seems to be a critical focus of this community college's enrollment management effort. During the visit, one of the participants mentioned that GCC had recently purchased a customer relations management (CRM) software system. At the time of the research visit, the tool was about to begin implementation at the college. This CRM will enable the college to provide standard communication messages to their students and will allow the college to segment them into categories by major or other area so that a more targeted mailing can be delivered if necessary. They are hopeful that this new technology will allow the college team to provide better service in a timely manner to all of their students.

Maintaining excellent communication with all departments assures that students receive consistent information no matter where their inquiry begins. One participant said "we have a well trained call center that fields questions. The front staff and the student services center are all on-board. It is because of the training done in every area. Students

do not just get a ‘yes or no’ answer, but an answer that is thoughtful and relays valuable information about our processing.” Another member echoed this sentiment by saying that this communication philosophy was a “change even among student workers because they know first-hand what happens when a student doesn’t do the things we have asked. Having the expectation from all of your staff that answers to questions go beyond the simple yes or no makes a big difference.”

### *Unsuccessful Practices of the Plan*

GCC has had some great successes in their planning process, however, like every new cultural shift, there have been some growing pains. The common themes among them can be categorized into two categories: a) barriers they have encountered and b) issues regarding the design of their overall plan. These will be discussed next.

*Barriers.* When the question “what has been unsuccessful in the enrollment management process” was posed in both the interview and the focus group, several elements were mentioned. One of the first barriers the college has continually faced is their state student information system. They share a system with others in their state that is considered very weak. It has hampered their ability to collect data to understand as much as possible about their own students. While the implementation of the CRM recently purchased will mitigate some of their chief concerns, it will not eliminate all of them.

Another barrier was institutional commitment. While this was considered a success for them as well, because of the commitment from senior leadership, this college serves as a reminder that institutional commitment often requires a college-wide cultural shift and must occur across all levels of the college. Sandy mentioned that one of their

barriers was dealing with staff resistance to the change in this shift. She summed it up this way:

We have some unhappy campers at our college. We are doing our best to either give them professional development to help them improve, or quite frankly move them down the disciplinary line so that they are not going to be working, especially on the front line. If they are not happy here, why are they working here? To deal with dissatisfied employees, especially in the midst of a big enrollment cycle, but even otherwise is a huge issue for us. You can have the most perfect plan on paper, but if you don't have buy-in from the whole college, it is not going to happen. It isn't going to happen in the way you want it to happen. I have seen that happen a lot. So we are constantly working on the problem children and trying to give them praise when they do things right and work on them when they don't. It is not ok anymore to just be crabby behind the scenes and sort of do your work, but not really do your work. I mean in the spirit of it. They are being held to a different kind of accountability standards and that is a big challenge for us.

Another barrier GCC contends with is the inability to add more staff to the college even though they are enrolling a record number of students. Sandy said:

These huge increases have been unbelievable to manage. We had a 15% enrollment increase in the fall and a 12% increase in the spring. We had a 50% enrollment growth over 5 years. We were 7500 students 5 years ago, we have 15000 now. That is HUGE. No one thought five years ago, well, we thought we would grow, maybe like 1%.

Sandy mentioned that the staff takes the full brunt of the enrollment increases but the leadership tries to reward them as much as they can. She continues:

We put a little staff into it, but probably not nearly enough. For them to have managed this huge growth is unprecedented. They just get all kinds of kudos for that. We can't, we are a state government, right, so we can't give them bonuses, but we do little things for them. The president and I go and serve breakfast for them after the enrollment cycle is over. We give them a half-day where they can close the office so they can get together and debrief and think about what they have learned...tiny things. At least we try to remind them that they are appreciated. They take most of the pressing of the flesh when the new students come in. They are exhausted after we get them in. We have to be honoring of the kind of work they do, we sure try. To handle this big enrollment increase has been a huge challenge.

#### *Design of Enrollment Management*

When asked about some of the unsuccessful components of the plan, the response wasn't an idea that had proven a failure, but more an omission in the plan itself. The college feels like they have done a good job with the recruitment aspects of their plan as evidenced by their enrollment increase. What has been omitted, however, is a college-wide effort to retain their students. A member of the enrollment management committee said:

I would say that the two pieces that we hope the plan will expand or involve, from a retention standpoint, working with those students who are already here so that they will meet with an advisor or counselor sooner and register sooner so that will

have, we hope, an impact on class availability so that the deans will be able to get classes in line earlier. Again, trying to move that earlier in the processes as opposed to at the end.

GCC's large enrollment growth does not allow them to require advising for all of their students, but they are developing a schedule of deadlines and priority dates for their returning students so that they are aware of when to register and pay their tuition. While they have devoted more of their attention to providing "attention to their students each step of the way" so that they feel informed, they intend to continue to expand the services they offer their returning students so student retention rates increase.

### *Evaluation*

Evaluation of plans and programs can be formal or informal. Most colleges will use a combination of efforts when evaluating how effective their processes are. GCC is no different. They use both formal, data-driven approaches and informal and anecdotal methods of evaluating the effectiveness of their enrollment management effort. Sandy explained it this way:

Well certainly the direct reports take a step back after each enrollment cycle and say "what worked?" and "what could we have done better?" I give a lot of credence to them because they are on the line and they know what is going on, on a day-to-day basis. I take a formal review of it at least twice a year. We are looking at ways to improve and support the team and serve students, but to improve on the way we manage the ins and outs of it. We (the person who manages the enrollment committee and her), take the time twice a year to meet sometimes we will invite the team in and sometimes it is just the two of us. We

acknowledge what our goals were usually for the next year we will do some tweaking for the next year.

She continued by providing an example of how they made changes to their processes based on feedback received from their committee:

I will give you an example. We are going to change our last day for testing for next year because what we found is that the students who test in those last days, even though we stopped it before school starts, don't do well. It is not fair to have them coming in. We are going to back that up for the coming year. I use that as an example, but there are other things like that. So, we do that. Certainly the personnel evaluations have evidence of enrollment management in their evaluations. If we haven't managed the nursing evaluation process well, which at one point while I have been here, we didn't, that gets noted with the director of admissions. That is her responsibility to think of other ways to come at that. Even in the evaluation there are elements of enrollment management. There would be at least three ways I would see it evaluated on a regular basis. I am evaluated on that by my boss. That is why we did some really major things with financial aid last year. He looked at me and said, 'it's not working so you need to help it work.'

And, he was right.

One participant of the focus group mentioned implementing a parallel evaluation process; the same process that currently occurs with the academic programs:

I think we are working toward that. We have an academic program review on the academic side, but we don't really have program review on the student services

side. I know that is something the IR team has on their radar, to develop something similar for us. We don't really have a good evaluation tool yet.

### Pearce Community College

Pearce Community College (PCC) is located in the Midwestern part of the United States. This college has an annual enrollment of 6000 credit students. PCC primarily serves two counties in their state with one main campus and two satellite centers. While this college serves an urban population, the college campus had a rural feel to it because it is surrounded by a large amount of acreage and they were using the majority of it for open space. Driving up to the college, it is clear they take great pride in their athletics programs because of the vast number of fields, stadiums, and tracks that are prominent on the campus. The college was very friendly and three students greeted me as I entered the college. These were students going about their college business, not greeters, and I felt welcomed immediately.

The meeting began with a brief consultation with the college's director of enrollment management/registrar, Julie. Following this introduction, she walked us to another location where her enrollment management team was waiting for their bi-weekly meeting. She wanted me to be a part of their conversation. After their meeting I was allowed to conduct my focus group. The focus group included six members of the college's enrollment management committee. Those attending were a) the director of academic resources, b) assistant director of admissions, c) assistant registrar, d) assistant director of an off-campus site, e) assistant director of the academic resource center, and f) the enrollment manager/registrar.

The focus group began with a slight hesitation from the group to answer questions. One member of the group was always willing to offer her explanations and answers and encouraged her co-workers to do the same. Once the hesitation was noticed, I reminded the group that their responses were confidential and would be reported with anonymity in the final research. The answers came more willingly after this reminder. The enrollment manager/registrar took the approach of an observer during most of the focus group, allowing her team to respond to the questions. Following the focus group, I interviewed Julie for approximately two hours. Following are the themes and patterns that have been identified during these meetings and as a result of the artifact review.

#### *Focus of the Enrollment Management Plan*

During the focus group, I began to formalize the idea that this committee had the benefit of strong leadership. Julie promoted the mission of the enrollment management division. She was clear about focusing their plan on goals tied directly to the College's strategic plan regarding recruitment and retention. I started both the focus group and the interview with the question "how do you define enrollment management at your college?" The answers were remarkably the same. I didn't have this experience at any other college I visited before or after it. Julie defined enrollment management in this way:

Jokingly, I tell folks that enrollment management is the "alpha through omega."

We see students coming into the college, we work to retain students once they are here, we graduate them and assist them with transfer if that is their plan. If I were to explain or try to define what enrollment management is, it is for a prospective or current student the beginning of their college career and we nurture them until we graduate. We work with them to make sure they are recruited, that they apply,



that they enroll, that they are retained, that they are graduated, and if desire, that they transfer.

Similarly, the members of the focus group echoed this sentiment. One of them said, “you see us from the beginning and THROUGH the end. We have components that you will need the entire time of your experience here. Testing, tutoring, academic advising.”

When asked how enrollment management got its start at PCC, the answer was an interesting one:

The plan was really the result of one of our board members asking for a glimpse of what our enrollment management team did and it talked about several things and they asked me to create a strategic enrollment management plan. Because you cannot create an enrollment plan in a vacuum, what I did was compile the data that he wanted us to gather and then we were to get together and then create an actual plan.

Once the plan was developed, the enrollment management team found they created initiatives at the college that were not very “intentional”. The focus of their enrollment management plan was to create a plan that was based on developing and implementing initiatives that were more intentional in nature and could provide measurable outcomes.

This plan became the structure that evolved into creating “cascading goals” for each unit that reported to Julie. Cascading goals were developed by the units in her leadership that tied their individual unit goals to that of the enrollment management plan which was linked directly to the college’s strategic plan. Julie explained she has incorporated a theme of tying goals to the strategic plan during her meetings:

People were saying, “how do we link what we do every day to this big strategic plan?” We have been trying to keep working on developing a culture that says “the strategic plan IS retention, the strategic plan IS student success, now how does your request tie into that?” In our meetings you will hear me say, “now that is interesting, but what does that have to do with retention, graduation or transfer rates?” because when it all comes down to it, our Board of Regents, our Board of Directors, our President, that is what they are being held to task for.

One of the documents PCC provided as an artifact was their “Cascading Goals Scorecard.” This document developed their college’s strategic plan into smaller goals within their enrollment management division. Each goal was further broken down into a specific and measureable goal and a committee is assigned to work on it. It was apparent by their color-coded scheme that this document is used by the division to monitor their progress with each goal routinely and even holds a place on their weekly team meeting agenda.

The structure that PCC has chosen to use when implementing their enrollment management plan most closely resembles the enrollment management coordinator structure (Kemerer, Baldrige, & Green, 1982). Julie serves as the group’s facilitator and champion, but her role is different than that described by Kemerer, Baldrige, and Green. While the best interpretation of the coordinator structure ensures a college-wide commitment, PCC has not established this. Their work occurs largely within the departments that report directly to Julie and, in most cases, does not tread beyond those borders. While this has seemed to improve, Julie’s goals have been to have her division become more involved in college-wide decision making.

### *Successful and Unsuccessful Practices of the Plan*

PCC has had several successful initiatives in their plan and have struggled with some issues as well. The participants were willing to discuss both the triumphs and the hardships they have endured during the meetings. These are discussed in the following sections.

#### *Successful Practices*

The PCC enrollment management committee has some very strong components to their initiative. Two themes that were apparent throughout the focus group and the interviews were: a) collaboration, and b) becoming intentional in targeting student populations identified as needing additional resources in college.

*Collaboration.* Working as a team throughout the enrollment management division was clearly evident throughout the data collection process. When asked how Julie's team was organized, she responded:

We have what we call an EMD Core Meeting (Enrollment Management Division Core Meeting). That is where all the directors and the assistant directors in the enrollment management division, we get together once a month and we meet. We share reports of what we think each other should know and they also share anything that they want to know, they ask me of course, about what happened at Deans Council and what happened at the Board Meetings.

During my visit, I was allowed to attend one of the division's meetings. It was a well-run meeting that allowed each member to offer an update and to hear the other unit's updates as well. In the spirit of collaboration, the division has even created a mission statement that is added to their meeting agenda. It reads, "It is the mission of the enrollment

management division to provide supportive educational resources to students and the community”.

Being true to their mission, this style of collaboration has allowed the entire unit to focus on student services and provides excellent customer service to their students.

One focus group participant explained it this way:

If the phone rings, it may be something that isn't per se in our area, but because we are an enrollment management team, even if I don't know the answer about say when placement testing is being offered, we know how to look up the answer. We can get them with the right person if they have more questions. Because we are all in the same division, we know a little bit to keep the student connected. It is more customer service to our students rather than just saying “oh that is a financial aid question or testing question.” We can get them connected to the right person. We know enough to make them understand that we know some of the answer and can send them to someone else.

Not only has the unit been collaborative internally, they have also worked college-wide to enhance student services. One initiative the college has recently undertaken has been academic advising. The enrollment management team has partnered with other divisions on campus to create an academic advising management team that is more intrusive in nature. To create a paradigm shift in college-wide academic advising was a huge undertaking. Like any new concept, the college needed to determine what the needs were. Julie said:

The counselors would like to make everyone see an advisor but the faculty did not like the model because they said ‘what happens when we are not here.’ The

faculty did not want all the complaints because the faculty were not available. The other issue was that the faculty do not all work during the summer and the counselors couldn't see them all when they weren't available. So the question became 'who would they see?'

Working together with other units to design the best model was the only way to develop a new advising system to make sure that everyone had their own needs met: the students, the faculty and the counseling and advising team. Julie explained it this way:

Last year we started our advisement management team and that was where we revamped the advising process. We now have a cross-functional advising team. From academic, student services, enrollment management, and our other centers meet once per month to talk about advising issues and assign students to the advisors, we have an intake advisor who actually assigns them.

*Intentional Planning.* One aspect this college focused on during the interview and focus group was adding a component of "intentionality" to what they were doing in enrollment management. When they began their planning, they realized that many of their goals and events did not have any measurable outcomes. As a result, they have developed a more intentional approach to their goal-setting that includes strategies with measurable outcomes. Julie spoke about the how the implementation of their cascading goals started:

That is why we went to cascading goals because that was part of our issue. People would turn in STUFF! It would be 'nice.' I have one person who loves to go to chamber events, junior achievement events. All those are beautiful, but they do what? Did you talk to anyone about the school? And if you did, did they send us

10 more people? What happened? So that has been part of the challenge with us to turn all of that stuff into something we can use. That has been our challenge. It didn't convert to anything that was useable. So we thought we needed to have another plan! We have to start saying 'turn in measureable goals.' If you tell me you are going to 10 chamber meetings or 10 community events. That is going to do what for us? Is it related to recruitment, retention, graduation?

Moving toward a more intentional approach has had a positive effect on the student services they provide. Throughout both the focus group and the interview, the pride the staff has for some of their new initiatives was clearly evident. One initiative they have implemented is mandatory placement testing for all of their new students. One of the struggles this college had was students choosing advanced courses in math and English when their placement tests indicated they needed remedial work. Upon reviewing the data of students who were not successful when they chose their own courses, the college implemented a stricter policy for placement and ensured students were connected with resources as early as possible. One participant said:

We have a lot of underprepared students and first-generation college students coming in and we are trying to place them where they can be successful. I think we are all aware of that and it ties in even when they do the application in student success...to make sure we get them where they need to be for testing so they don't go into academic courses. We can send them on over to On-Track or for special advising. We are now working to make sure they get to their advisor early on.

The college has also increased their presence in their external community. They spoke about an initiative that they are currently involved in that works with a young minority population who has not enrolled at PCC. One of the goals in working with this population is to have conversations with these young men to learn why they have chosen not to pursue college. Being armed with this information allowed the college to rethink how they market their services. Julie detailed one of their new programs and spoke about how feedback from the participants allowed them to put a liaison in place to assist students with barriers they were challenged with overcoming prior to and during their enrollment:

We have this program that meets every Thursday. What we were doing is bringing them in and finding out “why are you not going to school?” Some we found out it was because some of them had some encounters with the law and they didn’t think they could go to school; some we found out that their high school experience wasn’t all that positive and people told them they couldn’t go; some needed to be in the GED program and they had had some experience with GED and it wasn’t very favorable and they thought it wasn’t for them; others weren’t quite sure how to get into a vocational program because they thought it was just for high school students. Then we had issues like transportation, they didn’t have bus passes, they didn’t have jobs. Once they got here, they didn’t always find someone on campus who could guide them. What we did in our program is, we have a young man who is a liaison and if they say they need a service, I have him go with them to introduce them to the tutors, to get services, if they say they need GED, we walk them over to the GED program.

The results of having this program in place has increased their enrollment with the African American population and has given them a greater sense of “presence” in their own community. Students work with their liaison as barriers arise to find solutions and so students can continue to focus on their education.

One of the skills Julie seems to have perfected is listening to the needs of the community and responding to them. One of the issues the college was struggling with was enrolling students in developmental education. This was evident in the data she provided about placement testing outcomes and their vast need for developmental coursework. As Julie noted in PCC’s *Strategic Enrollment Management Plan*, “it is difficult for some to embrace the idea that ‘college bound’ does not mean ‘college ready’.”

The college took a look at the students going into developmental classes and decided that some students would benefit from a summer workshop to get them the skills they needed and to avoid having to take a full semester of developmental courses. Julie and her enrollment management team listened to what the student needs were and responded:

The community said they needed us to have courses at this time and not this time. Our PACE program that goes more toward the working adult, we have to ask them what they want and then try to implement it within our structure. Sometimes we have to get rid of that and get creative in our ways of thinking. Those boot camps you heard them talking about (in the focus group) was us going out and finding out what people wanted and the school district saying the students are wasting too much time taking developmental classes. We knew they needed them,



so how can we make sure they are prepared? So, we create these boot camps.

They are supposed to help them get prepared and avoid spending an entire term in the classroom.

Along with establishing the boot camps, PCC has strengthened their approach to academic advising. In PCC's *Strategic Enrollment Management Plan*, Julie wrote: "it is reasonable to conclude we have dismantled the perception that advising is a chance encounter. We have created an expectation that academic advising is a critical part of the circle of support that students will receive at PCC."

#### *Unsuccessful Practices*

Like any cultural shift at a college, overcoming barriers is often the greatest challenge. When asked about what some of the unsuccessful aspects have been with the PCC enrollment planning initiative, technology and space barriers were mentioned. However, the theme most prevalent when discussing barriers was achieving institutional commitment.

*Barriers.* The college staff was very candid in discussing some of the barriers they have faced as they implemented their enrollment management initiative. Like many colleges, they have recently faced the challenge of implementing a new computer system. While this will eventually offer more student-friendly services, right now they are experiencing the pain of implementing the program. The staff seemed to have a good attitude about this; expecting the growing pains as necessary for improvement. What did seem to surface as barriers to their success was their feeling of a lack of institutional commitment for the enrollment management initiative.

*Institutional Commitment.* While the enrollment management committee has invested in the work they do, it seemed like it has been a struggle to get the same commitment college-wide. One focus group participant said:

I don't feel we have had a lot of input on the academic side. As far as the numbers of students going into certain programs, we can't say look at this program because enrollment is low. I think they are separate functions. I don't see them intertwined like they are at other schools that use the term enrollment management.

Julie further articulated this sentiment when asked about the challenges of implementing their plan. She explained it this way:

I think it goes back to institutional buy-in. Folks not feeling like an add-on every time you add a new plan. It feels like you are adding more on to my responsibility instead of just being part of what we do so trying to remove the add-on feeling. Getting the academic side to see it. I think they view it as a valuable component, I don't think they see it as equally as important as what they do in the classroom. I think if they would look at the research, it talks about how the student's out of class experience can have just as much impact on retention as what happens in the classroom. I think that all this stuff that we are doing that may be considered "peripheral" stuff, may be having as much impact on whether or not they stay. What they get involved in as far as organizations here, and how they feel about being here. We have attempted to get rid of the silos, but in some instances you can't do that. In some ways I think that is a nice concept but inside a flat organization is still silos.

The focus group echoed this sentiment when asked, “What advice do you have for colleges who may try to implement an enrollment management initiative?” One participant said, “Everyone needs to know what this concept is. It is not just the admissions office with its three little windows. It is now going to have a broader role, a bigger picture, a package. Get the institution to understand what this is and what changes we should see so that everyone understands the concept.”

The frustration that was apparent during the interview and focus group about college-wide buy-in was also evident in the artifacts PCC provided. The collaborative effort of the enrollment management team so obvious during my time there apparently stopped short of being college-wide. Their meetings included only the enrollment management staff and their enrollment management goals were limited to their department.

Understanding this lack of commitment to be a weakness in their institution, the members of the focus group provided a theory about the role the office location played in how an office or unit might be perceived college-wide. In many institutions the admissions office plays a central role in the enrollment management framework. If the enrollment management division is also centrally located within the Admissions Office, it may give an ambiguous message to the college. One member of the focus group put it this way:

When they built this building, they didn't make an admissions office, they made offices like you would find in a high school with three little windows. If you had an issue, everyone came here. They didn't do a good job identifying where the divisions were. It started with everyone coming to the Admissions Office asking

questions and then they changed the name to Enrollment Management but the culture didn't change with it. The buy-in wasn't there. There is a long history there and it takes a long time for these things to change.

In addition to geographical location of the enrollment management division, the title and expectations of the role need to be clarified. College administrators need to clearly define the responsibilities of an enrollment management director to the internal community. Julie's title is director of enrollment management and the registrar of the college. Julie said it this way:

We had a Registrar and he was in the position for 20 years before he retired. It was when they restructured it they didn't think about the fact that to go from a dean from enrollment management/registrar, they didn't think of what that really meant. It was an undefined role, nobody had any idea what it was going to be. Through the years it has never changed. The registrar function needs to be a different function because the dean's function is a whole other world and it needs to be taken away because it is a different dimension. I think what they did was just change the title and then it evolved. Then once it evolved, like most things in the college they just get comfortable and let it be.

She continued to explain the frustration of having the role confusion that comes with not understanding the responsibilities of her position. She described that the president hasn't clarified the expectations of her role to the college:

The college sees my role as an Admissions function, a Registration function, as a front-end function, and we are constantly fighting "why am I in everyone else's business?" But everyone else's business is enrollment management. I think for the

next pioneer, they will have more of a concept than was here for before I came because they bought into a person's desire to have a concept, not an institution change and embrace a new way of thinking. That is what enrollment management is, it is a new way of thinking and the college didn't do that.

The impression I received from the focus group participants was they enjoyed the services they provided and they had created an internal culture of working for the students' benefit even if they did not feel like the culture of the college supported it. One participant said:

I think it works because there is buy-in from the three offices that pull together: the admissions office, the financial aid office and the testing and tutoring center. We all buy in to the fact that this is enrollment management. We try really hard to do the one-stop shop for the students and we have tried to pull our resources and coordinate and integrate so that it works within student services. Even though we don't have the buy-in from the academic side as much as I would like to see, we do the best we can with what we have been handed. We work really well as a team.

#### *Evaluation*

One of the approaches that PCC is starting to take is using data to support their initiatives and to determine if their enrollment management planning is successful. One of the products of this is the cascading goals concept. When asked about how their enrollment management plan was evaluated, Julie said:

We linked it with our cascading goals. One of the staff members brought this concept to us and asked if we could use this concept of "cascading goals". I think

also what is unique about the plan is that, we too, are beginning to think more like academicians. To use the data, to drive the decisions to support the idea that you say is so or is happening or to use data to request and ask for something. “What do you have, what evidence do you have, what artifacts do you have to support that this is so?” Other than, “it feels good. Or, I thought so. Or, I thought maybe.” What do you have? Show me the evidence.

We try to move toward using standards to try to show that evidence.

Julie has also encouraged her team to begin to think in terms of data because she believes data-driven decision making will be more accepted in college-wide meetings. When asked “what is on the horizon for PCC’s enrollment management committee and planning?”, Julie said:

I think on the horizon would be the data. As we are doing more, if we have the data that suggests that those students who come and start classes two weeks after classes start need more tutoring and more time catching up, if we submit that information for review, I think you have more of a foot-hold and a place to stand. But, if you just submit that information as an opinion and not supported by anything, folks tend to say “well that is interesting” but what do you have? So, when we say that “we KNOW this is so, but we don’t say here is the data, here are the students...if you want to track it and see if you come up with the same result, let’s do it in your class”. I think that sounds more “academic”. They think the enrollment management side and student services side tend to not be perceived as “academic branches of the colleges”. And because we are not academic branches of the college, then our intellectual real estate isn’t as high. We have to start

thinking like “academicians” if that is what they value, you have to give them what they value and not what many would call a “powder-puff conversation” or your feelings or what your gut is telling you.

When reviewing the college’s strategic enrollment management plan and their “cascading goals scorecard” it was evident that the college has created a culture of evidence. The strategic plan included a large amount of data and graphic explanations of the college’s enrollment history. This data also included very specific breakdowns on how the college awarded their financial aid over several years. This data was clearly displayed and explained and would be very helpful to even the novice audience.

#### Reese Community College

Reese Community College (RCC) is a community college located in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. This college has an annual enrollment of approximately 8000 credit students. RCC has one main campus and serves a suburban population. Prior to conducting my interview, I took a self-guided tour of the college. It looked like a fairly young college, but I was told that it is, in fact, much older than it looks. They were in the midst of construction of some new buildings and I was surrounded by newly constructed buildings. Some of the older buildings were located near the back of campus. It was clear they used every inch of space on their campus!

My visit began with Linda’s interview, the college’s enrollment manager. She had a very spacious office that had a great springtime view of the campus. Her workspace was clearly designed to allow her plenty of room to work and engage in planning activities because she had a very large table covered with documents. As she welcomed me into her office, she mentioned she wasn’t sure what information I would be interested

in having, so she made me copies of a many different planning documents. Some were historical in nature; others more contemporary versions of their college's current planning documents.

Linda and I spent over an hour discussing the enrollment management effort at RCC. We took a break and during this time, she gathered some people from her enrollment management committee to join us for a focus group. The focus group was held with three members of the enrollment management team in attendance. While I was hopeful that others would be able to participate, those in attendance were very candid about the enrollment management effort and shared a wealth of information about their approach. The three participants held the following positions at RCC: a) the vice president of enrollment management, b) the director of institutional research, and c) the director of their off-campus sites.

#### *Focus of the Enrollment Management Plan*

Like many community colleges that have an enrollment management plan, RCC's plan was created because the college began to have a decline in their enrollment. An early version of their *July 2000 Marketing and Communications Plan* explained that after "experiencing low enrollment in the mid-1990s, they rebounded with sustained growth through 2000." Having had this experience the *RCC Strategic Enrollment Management Plan* was created to:

Enable the institution to function in a stable enrollment environment, rather than deal with an adverse impact on finances through low enrollment. The negative consequences of low enrollment divert the institution from its mission to serve our district, and disable efforts to focus on positive program development.



Like many postsecondary institutions, enrollment is tied to state funding levels, so the need for increasing their headcount became imperative. Linda explained the history of their enrollment management initiative began in the 1990s because their enrollments had been “a little rocky.” The need for enrollment management planning became necessary to understand their enrollment because it directly correlates to their state funding:

This state funds its community colleges by a target identified by the state board; it has some trend and history to it. That is how you get to it. If after a while you don't reach that goal, you are penalized. So, there is a lot of reason to do that as well just to look good and the desire to serve. In 2000, we got a new president who realized that to fit into the state's capital planning---how you get buildings---we had to have a plan for enrollment. Just like that a light bulb went on. We said “well, we can do that”. We had been developing our research, we have our enrollment data, and we KNOW a lot of these things.

Linda came to RCC with some experience in enrollment management, having implemented similar initiatives at her previous colleges. Linda explained that after reading definitions about enrollment management, she felt a more collaborative one was necessary. Her definition allows for the collaboration with other college units such as the financial and student services arms of the college. Over the course of her experience with enrollment management, Linda has developed a definition of enrollment management at community colleges:

Enrollment management is a comprehensive and coordinated process that enables a college to identify enrollment goals that are alive with its mission, its strategic plan, its environment and its resources and to reach those goals through the

effective integration of administrative processes, student services, curriculum planning and market analysis.

The structure of Linda's team at RCC is that of enrollment management coordinator. One of Linda's job responsibilities is the coordination of the college's enrollment management plan. She reports directly to the college's president. Linda's committee includes representation from across all campus units and has achieved commitment from the highest levels of leadership at the college.

#### *Successful and Unsuccessful Practices of the Plan*

The enrollment manager and the committee members were willing to discuss their enrollment management process candidly and with a great deal of humor about their experiences at their college. During the course of the interview and focus group a few themes were identified about some of the successful and unsuccessful aspects of their planning process. What appears to be successful is a) the leadership of the enrollment management effort at the college and b) the willing collaboration across several of the campus units. What has created some challenges for the college is that they struggle with some external barriers such as funding and creating an environment of empowerment in the design of the enrollment management committee.

#### *Successful Practices*

*Leadership.* Immediately what became apparent in the focus group was that RCC is fortunate to have Linda at the helm of the enrollment management committee. When asked, "what are some of the strongest components of your enrollment management effort here?" one participant gave this answer:

We have an expert in enrollment management. The strongest component is her leadership. She pulls in other resources for us to look at for enrollment and also brings in some of the principles for viewing enrollment. She connects us and reminds us of what the strategic plan is and then in turn what the mission is and keeps us directed that way. That is a real strength in it.

Another participant agreed by saying:

We have a good resource like Linda. Someone who has the ear of decision makers and who is really committed on this component of the college administration. I think that is an imperative. You can't make this happen, without having that pivotal upper level management person involved...having an instigator rabble rouser as it were.

Having an advocate at RCC to lead the enrollment management charge has clearly been a benefit to the work the committee is doing. According to the focus group participants, Linda has the attention of the upper management at RCC. One participant said that the momentum the committee has achieved is a result of Linda's ability to be the driving force behind enrollment management. One participant said:

Linda has been the bulldog on the pant cuff since day one. She has had more traction in that role because of higher level institutional support. That has been pivotal, she has a willingness to really latch on and think hard about strategies that might have an impact on managing enrollment.

Upon hearing this description of her efforts at RCC, Linda smiled and said "more like a dog with a bone." When reviewing the artifacts RCC provided, it is clear that Linda has been crucial to their efforts. She has been responsible for developing marketing plans,

communications plans, strategic enrollment management plans, and ensuring the college has the necessary information to make data-driven decisions.

*Collaboration.* The RCC plan involves many offices across campus. The committee that is structured currently involves administrative offices, academic offices and student services. When Linda was asked if the effort was collaborative, she answered:

It is as collaborative as you can be when people have totally full plates. I have found that one of the things that happens unless you are in totally dire straits with your enrollment, is that it is not at the top of the agenda. People will participate but it just gets a lot looser when you are not desperate. We have a table full of people who are from instruction, administrative services, marketing, research, student services, student government, they are there. That is important. When I first got started here, it was mostly marketing and admissions plan because we could not get buy-in from other places which was part of the problem and why we were struggling. We took that form, which we often say it shouldn't take the form of, but I practiced what I call "incremental enrollment management." Which is, "you do what you can."

When the same question was asked during focus group, the answers agreed with Linda's. One participant said:

You know I think my perceptions are really limited because I have an "informed outsider view." I am outside here as well as on campus. As far as I know managers and administrators are behind it and in tune with it. Christine keeps us informed and she also keeps staff informed and has forums where people can

engage and hear information and give information. In terms of faculty buy-in, I think we have a culture here where faculty don't have an understanding of or interest in the bigger picture beyond their own classes and sections. It is more that the direct service providers are not buying in, but I don't know if they need to do so, but there is, in my experience with teachers there is more a personalization of classes being canceled or sections being added. Those are all essentially enrollment bearing.

### *Unsuccessful Practices*

*External Barriers.* When the discussion turned to some of the aspects that have been challenging to RCC's enrollment management effort several things were mentioned as barriers. One of those barriers is the feeling of not having enough information or control over the external aspects of their plan such as budgeting and finances. One participant said that the uncertainties made it difficult to decide which policies in their enrollment management plan they should focus on, "I won't pretend that one route is easy and ideal and we are just difficult to manage, but because of many uncertainties, coming to some sort of an agreement about what policies to implement."

Another participant mentioned that the external factors were the most difficult to predict and often left them feeling stalled. When asked, "what are some of the challenges of the enrollment management plan at your college?" she answered:

This is an external; the biggest of this process is that we don't know some of the moving pieces. We don't know these pieces, externally, and that is the budgets externally to us. Our state is in a very serious financial bind, I am sure yours is as well, it is safe to say all 50 are. So those are moving around and we do not know

what that means for here. So, as we are looking at program development, managing enrollment in certain sectors of the district, some of the financial pieces are going to fall. And we have to respond to it and pretty quickly. But on the upside, we are always evolving and are very organic, fluid and focused. Linda keeps us focused by saying, “let’s plan the future from this point and we will adjust as it comes”

#### *Design of Enrollment Management Committee*

During the focus group, one of the participants alluded to some difficulty the committee has in focusing some of their efforts and adding a component of intentionality to their plan. One participant mentioned that, despite Linda’s efforts, the committee has struggled with putting some strength behind some of the initiatives. He said:

I often thought that even though I have provided an awful lot of data for this along the way, that a lot of times things were not very concrete. We were hesitant to set targets and goals and I think by the identification of that, at least now there was a concrete number and we were going to seek to increase our enrollment by 3% in this particular area and it was a starting point. We spent a lot of time just spinning our wheels, talking. I sense some frustration on Linda’s part. We were not talking for the sake of talking, but we weren’t really moving forward. And I know Linda said that sometimes she took a good guess at what was a good goal would be. To be frank it probably didn’t really even matter that much, at least now we had a number on a piece of paper and you could say “All right, this is your area we are talking about, what do you think?” The identification of those concrete targets or

thresholds or goals or whatever you want to call them got people to see this as...well...take it more seriously. It became less theoretical and more concrete.

The artifacts I reviewed indicated that many staff across the college were involved in the enrollment management process. The meeting minutes indicated that each meeting had a wide representation from the college. In addition, when reviewing the colleges strategic enrollment plan it was evident that all facets of the college were included, not just the divisions under Linda's leadership.

### *Evaluation*

During the focus group when I asked "how would you evaluate your enrollment management plan?" one participant answered, "I give it a 75 because you can't dance to it". This segued into a more serious discussion about how the college evaluates their plan. This college has several methods in place to measure how their plan is doing. One participant said:

If you have seen the grid that is our plan, there is tenuous evaluation and Linda does put that in so you see it in a very tangible way. You can see if you have made progress, you can see if it isn't happening. You can see if there are areas where we are struggling. I think that grid keeps us on track, there is the highest level of authority responsible for each area (vice president level), specific tasks within that area, and they are connected to a specific strategic plan. Item 1 has who is responsible for each of those sub-items: you have the same thing, the person responsible, the primary task and the outcome. It is a tool that is used in an ongoing way. The assumption is that we can always do something a little

differently to test it. There is always something that can be done, it isn't fixed or ever finished.

Another comment in the focus group gave the impression that the evaluation method was one that was more intuitive and not handled in a formal way, but is highly effective.

I think that is a little bit like the instructor who doesn't have a rubric but grades on a gut feeling. Maybe I am wrong, but nothing explicit comes to mind of an evaluation process we use. We kind of do it along the way when we discover that things are not working well. I don't know that we have...it's kind of like an informal evaluation process. I would say that it is relatively effective and now that I reflect on it I would say that it is surprisingly effective in that we have never sat down and established a set of criteria by which we would evaluate the process. I think we understand pretty quickly if things are working or not. We look at a number of things. Linda has been really good at saying, "Look, we are making no progress here. We have been dillydallying enough". She tries to force people to come to decisions and it's very informal. You may even say that it isn't an evaluation process but it is. When the ship isn't going in the right course, we say let's look at that rudder again.

During this conversation, Linda took notes and was very thoughtful about the evaluation process that RCC currently uses. She appreciated the opinions of her enrollment management committee. She offered her own explanation of how she feels the evaluation process is handled:

Well, we are sort of in the middle of it right now as we look at all those numbers.

Last fall compared to this fall and some of those things on our plan. We have been



doing it, as you have said, informally. This looks like we need to add some numbers, this one is moving ahead and this one is not. This is my opinion. At the last meeting when I said I will try to write this up and give it to you...is really a reflection of all of our comments about well, the evening, the online, the [other sites]...all of those things which had funny numbers in here. Probably we will feel in the spring like we actually had an evaluation and here is the outcome of that evaluation—which is tweaking. But you are right. It is a good thing for me to think about. It has been very organic as opposed to ‘it is March 1<sup>st</sup> and this is when we evaluate the plan.’ We have not done that.

Reviewing their *2009-2011 Strategic Enrollment Management Plan* provided insight into how the college quantifies and evaluates their planning process. Their plan provided trend data, clearly defined goals and justification for those goals. During the interview Linda said, “Your strategic plan DRIVES your enrollment management plan and your enrollment management plan SERVES your strategic plan.” In keeping with Linda’s philosophy, the goals outlined in their enrollment management plan tied directly to the college’s strategic plan.

#### Cross-Case Analysis

This section of Chapter 4 analyzes the themes found in the data collected among the three community colleges. This analysis pays close attention to similarities and differences in the three college’s enrollment management practices, along with the focus of their plans, their successful and unsuccessful practices, and how they evaluate their respective plans. The three community colleges in this study have different personalities

and populations, ranging from suburban to urban settings. Despite these differences, each college demonstrated a commitment to their enrollment management planning process. The following section discusses each college in relation to the following themes: a) focus and structure of their enrollment management effort, b) the successful and unsuccessful aspects of their plan, and c) the evaluation of the plan.

### *Focus of the Enrollment Management Plan*

The first research question asked, “What is the focus of the college’s enrollment management plan (recruitment, retention, managing enrollment) and how is the implementation of this effort structured (committee, workgroup)?” The overall purpose of the enrollment management plan at each college, as explained by participants and as determined by the artifact review, is to recruit students, retain students, to graduate students, and to ensure their enrollment management goals were aligned with the college’s strategic plan.

While each college was currently experiencing an enrollment increase during the visit, they all mentioned that growth had not always been the trend. Reese Community College entered into the enrollment management arena to monitor their growth and to ensure they understood their enrollment trends. Having experienced a decline in enrollment it is important to them to know their market and to strategically be prepared should their student population begin to decline again. Similarly, Gregory Community College emphasizes getting students into the classes they want and need and monitors their progress. While admitting they did not focus on retention as much as recruitment at this point, they did plan to enhance their focus on keeping their students enrolled at their college. Pearce Community College had the most comprehensive view of enrollment

management because they choose to focus on what they termed the “alpha and the omega”. Stated in another way, their enrollment management plan involves following their students from their first point of contact with them until they transfer or graduate.

#### *Structure of the Enrollment Management Plan*

Each college took an individual approach with the composition of their enrollment management committee. The GCC committee follows the structure of the enrollment management division because it is led by someone who reports directly to the vice president of enrollment management. The committee itself is structured with the offices that report into the vice president: admissions, registration, student services, and financial aid. The vice president of enrollment management is very active with the committee and works closely with them throughout the year.

PCC has adopted the enrollment management coordinator structure. The individual in charge of the PCC enrollment management committee is the director of enrollment management/registrar who reports directly to a vice president at the college. The committee’s composition is made up of those offices that report to the director: admissions, testing, recruitment, registration services.

Similar to PCC, RCC’s enrollment management organization aligns with the enrollment management coordinator structure. RCC’s committee was the most diverse of all of the colleges visited. Their committee was structured by reporting to someone who had extensive experience in enrollment management and reported to a vice president. Their committee was comprised of staff from academic administration, financial aid, student services, institutional research, admissions, and registration.

### *Successful and Unsuccessful Practices of the Plan*

The second research question asked, “What have been some of the successful and unsuccessful practices of the plan?” When the colleges discussed their successes and practices that were less successful, some commonalities were identified. Among the successful commonalities were the high levels of collaboration and communication, as well as commitment to enrollment management. Unsuccessful practices included achieving institutional commitment, and creating an environment of intentionality to the planning process. A discussion of each of these elements follows.

#### *Successful Practices*

*Collaboration.* To ensure success of their enrollment management initiative, each college has become more collaborative within their own unit and with other units across the college. At GCC, having college-wide collaborative meetings about enrollment has been crucial to managing their 50% enrollment growth over the last 5 years. This collaboration has allowed the staff to implement procedures and expectations for the students that have enabled them to successfully navigate GCC’s college process.

At PCC, their committee meets regularly to discuss the needs of their students. These meetings allow the group to benefit from the collective synergy to brainstorm how to best meet students’ needs and keep updated with college decisions and planning. This collaboration has allowed them to work together as a team and offer a high level of service to their students. The staff takes pride in knowing the answers to student questions, beyond their own unit.

The RCC staff credit their success to the collaboration among other units college-wide. The enrollment management committee at RCC has representatives from most of

the college's departments. Having this level of college involvement has allowed the college to proactively manage their recent enrollment increases and to have a plan in place should enrollment declines occur. Another benefit to the collaborative nature of RCC's plan is an increase in accountability. The committee is able to develop a diverse enrollment management plan and assign staff to be in charge of aspects that impact their division. This level of accountability ensures that the plan is managed throughout the college, and not just by the individual charged with implementing enrollment management.

*Communication.* Colleges have enhanced their ability to communicate within the units and with the students as a result of the enrollment management efforts on their college. GCC's enrollment management team has spent countless hours drafting procedures that allow staff to understand and comply with the college policies. Once these are written, the college staff offers training to the staff and student employees so that the answers are consistent when questions are asked. The college takes great pride in the service they provide to their students and their service has been enhanced by having institutional procedures clearly mapped for staff to follow.

At PCC, the enrollment management committee meets monthly to discuss the college's recruitment and retention plan. Having multiple locations can often be a challenge but this college has committed to meeting regularly to ensure that communication is flowing within their unit and from the college leadership to them. This communication has enhanced their service to students and to the college.

RCC's enrollment management team has communicated their initiatives throughout the college by offering multiple forum opportunities to gather feedback. Once

the team receives insight from the college community they incorporate this into their work and present their plan to the college. This level of communication has led to a successful planning process and has enhanced commitment throughout the college.

*Commitment.* Having a strong level of commitment with enrollment management planning has allowed the colleges to move forward in making decisions and involving the college community with enrollment initiatives. At GCC, enrollment management has become a paradigm shift for their college. Having the support from the college president has allowed the administrators to effect change within their own units.

At PCC, while they did not perceive they had the benefit of institutional commitment, they had worked within the enrollment management division to create an understanding and a definition of what this concept means to them. This has allowed the committee to work to incorporate student recruitment and retention goals within their unit and to measure their outcomes. They consider their role the “alpha through the omega”—the beginning through the end of the college experience for their students.

#### *Unsuccessful Practices*

*Institutional Commitment.* The largest challenge PCC has encountered is that of institutional commitment. While their entire unit is supportive of the enrollment management concept, this is not necessarily true throughout the college. When they attend college-wide meetings they often feel like they are intruding or are outsiders. They do not feel like student services and enrollment services are welcomed at their meetings or are a necessary part of decision making. As discussed in the focus group, one of the contributing factors to this might be the dual role the director of enrollment management/registrar has. Having responsibilities for enrollment management and the

registrar is confusing to other staff by placing her in meetings that do not fit with one of her roles or the other. Julie, RCC's director of enrollment management/registrar, suggested colleges should have one role or the other, but not to combine them to keep this ambiguity from occurring.

*Intentionality.* Two colleges mentioned their plan lacked a few elements in early versions and they will work on enhancing in future iterations. GCC lacked a focus on retention in their enrollment management plan. GCC has focused on recruiting students over the last several years—as evidenced by their 50% enrollment growth in five years. One of the missing elements in their plan, however, is how to keep the students they enroll. No data was provided on the percentage of their returning students they retain, but the committee has decided this element needs attention. They indicated they will work in the next iteration of their plan to incorporate methods to retain their students.

PCC will continue incorporating an element of intentionality in their plan for future iterations. Intentionality is defined as developing tactics of their plan with purpose. Their approach with other units on campus is to act like “academicians”. They noticed that having data to support assertions is often taken seriously so they are changing their approach to the data they collect and in how they bring issues forward. The cultural shift may be a slow one, but they feel they are making progress.

#### *Evaluation of the Plan*

The third research question number was, “Does the college have a process for evaluating the enrollment management plan? If so, how were the steps determined? If not, how will the success of the plan be measured?” Analysis of the evaluation methods at each college revealed that no college had a structured evaluation method. They did,

however, evaluate every aspect of their plan using data and qualitative and/or anecdotal information to determine success of their efforts. While being perceived as a weakness or a challenge at first glance, each college took pride in their current evaluation process and had plans to implement a more formally structured evaluation measure in the near future.

When asked what type of evaluation method they use, GCC answered that they did not have a formal mechanism but one was forthcoming at their college. GCC has several informal evaluation methods in place to continually assess how their plan is working and to make adjustments in their plan should the need to do so arise. They have several planning sessions throughout the year to assess the success of their plan. Also, the director of enrollment management communicates regularly with the vice president and alerts her of issues that may impact service and enrollment. With this level of communication, changes can be implemented so that enrollment goals and mission are not negatively impacted.

PCC reportedly struggled with achieving institutional commitment throughout their college community. To combat this stigma, they are requesting more concrete data as they evaluate their plan because they noticed what received the most attention in their college meetings was concrete data and not the anecdotal information they would share. They believe this shift to be more intentional with their goals and to have measures in place to collect data will allow them to better evaluate the status of their plan.

RCC uses several methods to evaluate the progress of their plan. They use anecdotal data in meetings to assess their current status with enrolling and retaining students. They also use data-driven methods to assess the enrollment of their academic programs and to evaluate enrollment for funding levels. During the focus group, Linda



was interested in her committee's opinion on the evaluation methods in use. While they are pleased that their efforts are productive and are showing enrollment and funding increases, they were interested in having a more structured approach to the evaluation. Linda indicated that she would work on taking a more structured approach to the evaluation process and to the required data necessary for an effective report.

### Conclusion

Three themes summarize the cross-case analysis of this study. These themes are: a) collaboration, b) communication, and c) commitment. A summary follows:

#### *Focus and Structure of the Enrollment Management Plan*

The development of an enrollment management plan at each of the colleges was to recruit and to retain students. Only one college stressed their need to understand their enrollment because of how heavily their funding relied on enrollment increases. While all colleges had realized enrollment decreases in their recent history, two of the colleges stressed their concern for ensuring enrollment increases and retaining their students to graduation.

While each college took a collaborative approach with their committee, their structure differed. Two colleges adopted the enrollment management coordinator structure and one college adopted the enrollment management division approach. The colleges did involve several departments in their process: the financial aid office, the admissions office, and the registrar's office were present in all of the committees. Only one college had the involvement of their institutional researcher while the others relied on their own efforts to collect data necessary to support their goals. Only one of the colleges

interviewed had membership beyond the enrollment management division to include college faculty, financial services, and outreach offices.

### *Successful and Unsuccessful Practices of the Plan*

As the colleges answered the interview and focus group questions, themes were identified regarding successful and unsuccessful aspects of their planning process. Common themes of collaboration and communication emerged among all of the colleges. Each college viewed collaboration as critical to the success of their enrollment management planning. While the extent of the collaboration varied at each college, it did extend to at least those members in the enrollment management division in all cases. Other themes were identified at the colleges that were not apparent in all three: institutional commitment, intentional planning, and leadership of the enrollment management effort.

When discussing what has not or is not working at the colleges with regard to their enrollment management process, barriers seemed to be the most resounding theme. The definition of barriers was widespread, however. One college spoke about the barrier of staffing and resources. Their concern was not having the staff and space necessary to manage their recent enrollment growth. While this college had achieved institutional commitment with their enrollment management initiative, this had not necessarily trickled down to all staff—especially those who have been with the college for a number of years. This resistance was a barrier to them. Another college focused on institutional commitment as their barrier to success. While institutional commitment was achieved within the enrollment management division, they felt the lack of total commitment was limiting their ability to be completely successful. Another college spoke about external

barriers. These barriers included state funding and college initiatives in which they were unaware. They struggled with trying to make decisions and progress when the state funding and the resulting college response was nebulous. They did mention that they try to make progress anyway, knowing that they may have to be flexible as information is presented to their committee.

#### *Plan Evaluation and Measurement*

The final research question was designed to understand how college's evaluated the success of their enrollment management plan. While all three colleges had some type of evaluation method to assess their plan's effectiveness it was not formally documented as part of their enrollment management plan. This is not to imply, however, the evaluation methods were not useful. Each college evaluates their college's success with their enrollment management plan in two different ways: anecdotally and with data. All of the colleges mentioned reviewing their plan anecdotally in a meeting. They discuss what has been successful and what challenges they encountered. This anecdotal assessment is helpful to them as they plan for the subsequent semester's enrollment. In addition to anecdotal information, they also used data to determine the success with their plan. Each college had a mechanism in place to understand where their enrollment stands at all times and can react quickly to issues in enrollment if they need to do so. Each college indicated they were planning to implement a structured evaluation plan in the near future as the next phase of their enrollment management plan. This structure would establish a routine measure of the plan's success and would be handled at strategic periods during the enrollment process.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 5 presents a summary of *Critical Components of Community College Enrollment Management Planning*. Through this study, I examined the critical components three community colleges have recommended as helpful in beginning and continuing an enrollment management effort at their institution. This research allowed a comprehensive review of each college as successful and unsuccessful initiatives were explored. Following are the research questions that guided this study:

1. What is the focus of the college's enrollment management plan (recruitment, retention, managing enrollment) and how is the implementation of this effort structured (committee, workgroup)?
2. What have been some of the successful and unsuccessful practices of the plan?
3. Does the college have a process for evaluating the enrollment management plan? If so, how were the steps determined? If not, how will the success of the plan be measured?

To address the research questions, data was collected through in-depth interviews with the enrollment manager at each college, focus groups were held with the enrollment management committee, and the colleges' enrollment management plans and other planning documents were reviewed. After visiting each college, I transcribed the audiotape and analyzed the content for themes as outlined by Boyatzis (1998). In addition, artifacts collected at each site were analyzed for content that demonstrated implementation of enrollment management strategies. During this analysis, I discovered

elements unique to each college's enrollment management effort as well as concepts that were common among them.

Upon completing this analysis, I gained a clearer understanding about why the colleges entered into enrollment management planning, the successes they have encountered during their process, the barriers that hindered their work, and how they evaluate their enrollment management initiative. While each college was unique in its structure and demographic, there are some similarities in the responses to the research questions. These similarities and differences are discussed in this chapter.

There are five sections in this final chapter: a) a summary of the findings, b) a summary of the findings as related to the research questions, c) the relevance of the findings as they relate to the literature, d) recommendations for practitioners and future research, and e) a conclusion.

### Summary of Findings

The participants of the study were forthcoming about how their enrollment management plan was organized, the intention of developing an enrollment management effort at their college, what has been successful and what has not, and how they evaluate their plan. Kemerer, Baldrige, and Green (1982) stated that colleges structured their enrollment management committees in one of four ways: a) the matrix, b) the coordinator, c) the division, and d) the committee. All of the colleges organized their enrollment management committees using one of the structures defined by Kemerer, Baldrige, and Green (1982). Two colleges used the coordinator design while another's organization uses the division design. The colleges have entered into the enrollment management effort to manage their recruitment, retention, and graduation rates.

The colleges discussed three main ideas as successes: a) collaboration among other college divisions, not just those involved directly with enrollment, b) strengthening communication both with their internal offices and with the students, and c) establishing institutional commitment. When colleges discussed what has been unsuccessful they mentioned barriers such as not having enough staff and resources, being unaware of state and other college initiatives, and not having the commitment to enrollment management.

Plan evaluation at all colleges was handled anecdotally and not formally. All colleges, however, expressed their intent to establish a formal evaluation method that would use data and assess their goals at established intervals during their enrollment cycle. The colleges mentioned an intention to be more strategic by using data in subsequent versions of their enrollment management plans; their hope is that they will be taken more seriously by other units.

#### Findings Related to Research Questions

As the data was analyzed, it became apparent that while each college was uniquely structured and varied in size, location, and demographic served, they shared some similarities in how they structured their enrollment management initiative, some strategies they implemented that were successful and unsuccessful and in how they evaluated their planning process. This section will illustrate the findings from each research question.

##### *Focus and Structure of the Enrollment Management Plan*

The first research question examined each college's intention for implementing enrollment management on their campus and the structure they have designed as it was executed. The focus of developing an enrollment management plan at each of the

colleges was to recruit, to retain, and to graduate students. In addition to these reasons, one college stressed their need to understand their enrollment because of how heavily their funding relied on enrollment increases. While all colleges had realized enrollment decreases in their recent history and had entered into enrollment management planning as a result, two of the colleges explicitly stressed their need to improve graduation rates as well.

Each community college structured their enrollment management committee differently. Two colleges designed their structure using a coordinator model while another college had implemented a division approach as their model. All of the colleges' committees included representation from the financial aid office, the admissions office, and the registrar's office. Only one college had the involvement of their institutional researcher; the others relied on their own efforts to collect the data necessary to support their goals. Only one of the colleges interviewed had members from beyond their own enrollment management department that included college faculty, financial services, and outreach offices.

It was apparent as I interviewed each college that the coordinator model was more successful than the division approach. The colleges adopting the division model successfully demonstrated working outside of their unit by involving other departments in their planning. The college that had adopted a structure excluding other members from their college often felt isolated from college-wide decision making.

#### *Successful and Unsuccessful Practices of the Plan*

As the colleges answered the interview and focus group questions, themes were identified regarding successful and unsuccessful aspects of their planning process.

Common themes of collaboration, communication, institutional commitment and barriers were prevalent among all of the colleges.

*Collaboration.* Each college recommended an environment of collaboration when addressing their successful practices. Having integral divisions as part of the enrollment management discussion is crucial to decision making and in implementing the college's plan. While the level of collaboration varied among the colleges, each college did have the admissions office, the financial aid office, the testing center and registration services as part of their enrollment management team.

Two of the three colleges interviewed also included instructional leaders, financial services and marketing staff in their enrollment management team meetings. The college that did not have the benefit of these divisions in their meetings mentioned this as a definite concern as they often felt isolated in their decision making and frustrated in some of their lack of progress. Implementing an enrollment management plan at a community college is a massive undertaking. To make this effort successful, having committee membership from many key divisions is necessary. The two colleges who had more extensive representation agreed they were able to enjoy more brainstorming and teamwork in their ability to strategize tactics for their enrollment management planning. Having this level of collaboration allowed them to have a more global view of the college's needs and seemed to enhance their ability to make progress in their planning initiatives.

*Communication.* Enhanced communication was a common theme among all the colleges as they implemented enrollment management. Upon implementation, colleges have increased their communication with their internal community and with their student



population. Each college has regularly scheduled meetings with their enrollment management committee to discuss their progress with the enrollment management plan. In addition, one college had recently purchased a customer relations management (CRM) program that will increase their ability to communicate with their students and to vary this correspondence based on student demographic information such as major and grade level.

Committing to regular meetings with those involved in the enrollment management planning process is essential to creating a collaborative environment. During these meetings, the committee is able to develop strategies, plans, and tactics that are beneficial to meeting their enrollment goals and that have college-wide input. When constituents from throughout the college develop and implement an enrollment management plan, their decisions are more informed and the college as a whole will have committed to executing the plan and meeting its goals.

*Institutional Commitment.* Implementing enrollment management at any college requires a paradigm shift. Achieving a high level of institutional commitment is essential to its success. All of the colleges participating in this study mentioned how important this has been as they have ventured further into enrollment management practices. Two of the colleges have had the benefit of their top-level administration advocating for this cultural shift at their college. Another college had initiated this concept solely within their own division and without the support of their entire administration.

All of the colleges stressed the importance of achieving commitment to this concept starting with the top-level administrators and being pushed down to all employees. Without this level of support, enrollment management may prove frustrating

to those attempting to change the way the college conducts business or may even fail. The college that has created this change only within their own division mentioned how frustrating it is to not feel a part of the college's bigger vision and to be excluded from decision making that impacts student services. Even without this college-wide commitment, however, they had achieved a high level of commitment to enrollment management within their own division and have made improvements in how they serve their students.

Achieving commitment throughout the college is essential to the success of enrollment management. When the college administration makes the decision to engage in enrollment management planning, an environment of collaboration is borne. Having divisions across the college working toward implementing and executing enrollment management plans increases the likelihood that colleges will achieve their goals: growing enrollment, increased student retention, and improved graduation rates.

*Barriers.* When discussing what has not and what is not working at the colleges with regard to their enrollment management process, barriers seemed to be the most resounding theme. Barriers to the enrollment management process varied across each institution. One college spoke about their barrier of staffing and resources. Their concern was not having the staff and space necessary to manage their recent enrollment growth. Another college focused on institutional commitment as their barrier to success. While institutional commitment was achieved within the enrollment management division, they felt the lack of total commitment was limiting their ability to be completely successful. Another college spoke about external barriers. These barriers included state funding and

college initiatives in which they were unaware. They struggled with trying to make decisions when the state funding decisions were nebulous.

While overcoming barriers prior to implementation is the ideal scenario, some of these barriers are beyond the control of the college administration. Barriers such as funding concerns and competing college initiatives are often not within the power of the enrollment management committee to remedy. What was most impressive, however, was the committee's ability to overcome some of these barriers by creating a culture of communication and collaboration. Committees with an open line of communication and with regularly established meetings were able to react quickly to new information as it related to their enrollment management effort.

Other barriers such as institutional commitment and not having the staff and resources necessary to be successful are more difficult to overcome. Colleges faced with these challenges are forced to take a hard look at how they can remain committed to enrollment management while trying to work with the resources and the level of commitment they have achieved. During the interviews and focus groups, colleges facing these barriers were continually trying to be creative with their current resources and by remaining steadfast in their commitment to changing those aspects of their culture within their control.

#### *Plan Evaluation and Measurement*

The final research question was designed to understand how colleges evaluated the success of their enrollment management plan. While all three colleges had some type of evaluation method to assess their plan's success, it was not formally documented as part of their enrollment management plan. This is not to imply the evaluation methods

were not successful. Each college evaluates their success in two ways: anecdotally and with data. All of the colleges mentioned reviewing their plan anecdotally in their meetings. They discuss what is successful and what strategies need additional attention for use in future plans. This anecdotal assessment is helpful to them as they plan for the subsequent semester's enrollment. In addition to anecdotal information, they also used data to determine their success. Each college had a mechanism in place to understand where their enrollment stands at all times and can react quickly to issues in enrollment decline if needed. Each college indicated they were planning to implement a structured evaluation plan in the near future as the next phase of their enrollment management plan. This structure would establish a routine measure of the plan's success and would be handled at strategic periods during the enrollment process.

#### Relevance to the Literature

The participating colleges were willing to discuss their enrollment management initiative and expressed interest in the research and its findings. One explanation for this interest is the awareness that enrollment management in community colleges have been largely unexplored in prior research. The findings of this study will begin to address critical components in community college enrollment management planning. When comparing the research findings to the literature, six areas surfaced as relevant: a) strategic enrollment management structures, b) developing campus partnerships, c) establishing institutional commitment, d) planning and goal establishment, e) community college funding concerns, and f) evaluation of an enrollment management plan.

*Strategic Enrollment Management Organization Structures*

Following the four models established in the work of Kemerer, Baldrige, and Green (1982) the participating colleges did organize their structure according to one of the types. These four types were a) the enrollment management matrix, b) the enrollment management coordinator, c) the enrollment management division, and d) the enrollment management committee. Two colleges had implemented the coordinator structure while one college had structured their committee in the form of a division. The coordinator structure has one college administrator serving as the facilitator of the committee who leads the charge at the college. According to the authors, the coordinator in this structure may not have the authority to make decisions regarding enrollment issues. The colleges participating in this study reported directly to the president and were given the authority to make final decisions regarding enrollment concerns. While the enrollment management coordinator did have the ability to make the final decisions, they used the committee to vet all decisions. In addition, one of these coordinators even allowed the college community to have input prior to finalizing all major decisions. Having this structure in place at these colleges seemed to allow decisions to move forward and happen quickly when necessary; decisions were not stalled while waiting for final approval by another college leader.

One of the participating colleges had structured their committee in the form of an enrollment management division. Kemerer, Baldrige, and Green (1982) referred to this structure as the most centralized of all of four. This structure has a leader in charge of enrollment management, typically a vice president, who leads all of the departments responsible for impacting college enrollment. The participating college organized in this

structure, the dean of enrollment management is the person in charge coordinating the enrollment management initiative and managing the college's plan. While she has established collaboration in her own unit, not having the commitment and full collaboration of other college units has led to feelings of frustration and isolation.

While the authors' ideal scenario for the division structure is to have strong support by the president, this was not the case at this particular college. At the college in this study, the president was supportive of the enrollment management concept, but had not made it an institutional directive. This has created some tension and frustration on the part of the enrollment management staff because they do not feel like they are taken seriously as they try to make decisions that impact student services and consequently enrollment.

#### *Developing Campus Partnerships*

The participating colleges were forthcoming during the research process about what practices were effective and ineffective and those needing to be reexamined. This was evident in their insightful responses and willingness to share their successes as well as the practices they had attempted that were unsuccessful. One success experienced by all participants was establishing a culture of collaboration with regard to enrollment management. This aligned with the current literature and with what Maguire (1976) called the "grand design." It is essential for the success of enrollment management that certain college offices be a part of the conversation. The participants spoke of their collaboration as a success that has led to their enrollment growth. All study participants included admissions, registration, financial aid, the testing center, and academic advising in their enrollment management conversations and committee meetings. The current

research explains that it is necessary to have these units around the table because these offices are typically the first points of entry for community college students (Hossler, 1984; Hossler & Bean, 1990; Pardieck & Thomas, 1991). It is essential for colleges to provide superior customer service and continual assessment of their registration processes as inadequate services tend to affect the college's image and student satisfaction ratings (DeCristoforo, 1996; Gunn & Backes, 1992).

In addition, including academic advising in the conversation ensures students are being provided the highest level of understanding about their academic programs, their educational goals, and how the college can meet their needs. An effective academic advising model goes well beyond course selection; it allows students to learn more about how to be successful in college. While each of the participating college's expressed a desire to have a more effective academic advising model in place, they did have the support of the academic advising unit in their enrollment management effort and included them in the planning process.

The current literature also recommends colleges have the instructional departments as part of the committee. It is crucial to include faculty involvement in enrollment management planning because of the importance academic advising has on retaining and graduating students (Hossler, 1984; Thomas, 1990; Tuttle, 2000). In addition to instructional divisions, including institutional researchers is integral to successful enrollment management. Institutional researchers are critical to the enrollment management process, not only do they collect the data necessary to make informed decisions; they also interpret enrollment trends (Hossler & Bean, 1990). One participating college did have these units as part of their committee and were able to

access data more readily when necessary and were able to include faculty and advisors in decision making.

Creating a collaborative culture at the college is imperative to the work of any enrollment management design. This collaborative environment allows multiple college areas to be included in the college's plan and in the enrollment management process allowing for greater success. Each college recommended this as part of a best practice for any community college interested in establishing an enrollment management plan on their campus.

#### *Establishing Institutional Commitment*

Another successful practice at two of the community colleges is institutional commitment. Two of the colleges stressed the importance of having a college-wide commitment to the enrollment management process while one college had only managed to achieve this within the divisions that reported directly to the college's enrollment manager. The current research strongly suggests that for enrollment management to be successful, the entire college must invest in it. This investment must be encouraged by the highest level of leadership at the college and each campus office should have a place in the planning and implementation of enrollment management (Barnes, 1993; Dennis, 1998; Hossler, 1985; Kemerer, 1984). It seemed apparent with the participating colleges that successful commitment needs to include the participation of the instruction divisions and institutional research. Without the support of these offices, decision making that impacts enrollment is often conducted in isolation and without necessary information.



### *Planning and Goal Establishment*

When college-wide commitment and a collaborative environment is established, administrators are able to engage in more intentional planning efforts. While intentional planning as a theme was not shared by every college, it was strongly recommended by one participant. The literature suggests aligning the enrollment management plan with other activities such as strategic planning, program reviews and academic master plans (Dolence, 1993; Ward, 2005). One college developed a plan that closely aligned with the college's strategic plan and became very intentional. While the other colleges mentioned the importance of aligning their enrollment plan with other college plans, this college stressed its importance because this was a recent addition to their planning process and was proving very successful.

### *Community College Funding*

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the enrollment growth community colleges have experienced has not kept pace with the level of funding they are provided (AACC, 2009; Schmidt, 1999; Selingo, 2008). When colleges were asked to respond to what has been unsuccessful at their college their responses had to do with decreases in funding, staffing, and resources and the barriers to the planning effort these have caused. Colleges agreed they are dealing with funding uncertainties and this has been challenging when trying to plan goals for their enrollment management efforts. One college mentioned they have not been able to achieve commitment to enrollment management with some of their long-time administrative employees. While they are continuing to monitor the behavior of those who are struggling and work closely with those employees, it does hinder their initiative from being accepted college-wide.

Another barrier to successful enrollment management planning is the uncertainty of funding. One college mentioned it was increasingly difficult to make decisions about goals and strategies when they were unsure of what their level of funding would be and what their state's enrollment priorities would be. Decisions are taking longer to be made and to trickle down to the college administration thus making decision making very difficult for college leaders.

#### *Evaluation of an Enrollment Management Plan*

In order to understand the success of the enrollment management plan, it is important to have adequate measures in place. The current research on enrollment management planning strongly recommends colleges have an evaluation measure of their plans in place to track enrollment trends, identify areas of weakness at the college, and to promote continuous improvement. In addition, strategies that have been implemented to increase student recruitment and retention should be tracked, monitored, and discussed within the committee (Clagett & Kerr, 1994; Dolence, 1991; Dolence, Miyahara, Grajeda, & Rapp, 1987).

The participants of this study did not have any formal evaluation measure in place to assess the effectiveness of their enrollment management plan. Not having a formal evaluation process in place, however, did not mean they did not evaluate their retention and recruitment process. Each college understood the value of having data to measure and support their efforts. One college mentioned they felt as if their opinions were more highly valued if they had data to support their success rather than anecdotal information to share with their administration. Another study participant had staff from the institutional research department working on their enrollment management committee.

Although they collected and analyzed recruitment and retention data in order to understand their college trends, they did not have a formal evaluation process in place as part of their enrollment management plan. During the focus group this college talked about the value of this and planned to implement a formal evaluation timeframe into their plan in the near future. They expressed including this would ensure data was collected on a routine basis to be included in the formal document.

### Recommendations for Practitioners and Research

Integrating these research findings with the literature creates an opportunity to offer recommendations for community college practitioners and possibilities for future research. This section provides recommendations from these findings for practitioners. In the next section, suggestions for practice and future research are offered.

#### *Recommendations for Practitioners*

While the concept of enrollment management is not a new one for four-year institutions, it is an emerging trend on community college campuses. Whereas community colleges have enjoyed the benefit of growing student enrollment because of their open access philosophy and proximity to students, competition is emerging that no longer make community colleges the only option of access for many students. Many private and public colleges are creating on-line options for students that make this type of program more enticing to students who try to fit a college education into their already full lifestyles. For this reason, community colleges are beginning to explore ways to understand their students so they can improve recruitment, retention and graduation rates.

Community colleges are beginning to investigate methods of increasing student success through effective recruitment and retention efforts. With this goal in mind,

enrollment management initiatives are becoming more prevalent. College administrators are actively engaged in learning more about their students and the trends that entice them to attend their local community college.

As colleges begin to experience a decline in their enrollment, the question becomes “why?” and “if they aren’t going here, where are they going?” To combat the enrollment uncertainties, some community colleges are beginning to research enrollment management best practices and determine what critical components are necessary to build an initiative at their college. Colleges are beginning to implement enrollment management plans and to learn all they can about their own student trends. Following are seven suggestions for practitioners as they implement an enrollment management plan initiative at their own college:

- 1) Colleges should ensure institutional commitment to the enrollment management initiative begins at the highest level of leadership and continues through all college departments.
- 2) Internal and external barriers such as funding, staffing, and space issues should be resolved prior to implementation of an effective enrollment management initiative.
- 3) Colleges should create an environment where all employees understand their role in the recruitment and retention process. Having each college employee fully appreciate their role at the college and how it relates to recruiting and retaining students will create a culture of “students’ first” and therefore provide the highest level of service possible.

- 4) Key offices at the college must be willing to communicate and collaborate. Offices such as instruction, financial aid, admissions, registration, and academic advising involved in the enrollment management process are essential to a thriving initiative.
- 5) Colleges should be intentional in their planning process. Enrollment management plans should not be created without including information from other plans already in place at the college. Incorporating goals from the college's strategic plan and academic master plan is essential to ensuring the college is working in tandem with the mission of their college.
- 6) The administrator assigned with leading the effort should be provided the authority to make decisions impacting enrollment or report directly to those who do. Because of present economic conditions, financial decisions are often made quickly as funding information becomes available. If the leadership has the proper authority, they can react quickly to these decisions as information becomes available.
- 7) Have adequate staffing in place at the college to ensure there are resources available to implement the enrollment management effort. Lack of college staffing and other essential resources will impede the ability to fully execute their plan.

#### *Recommendations for Future Research*

While this current study provided excellent insight into community college enrollment management, following are five suggestions for future research:

- 1) Due to the current economic concerns, enrollments at community colleges were booming at the time of this study. Future research should consider studying the impact of enrollment management planning in a time when enrollment has stabilized at colleges. This will allow the true impact of a college's enrollment management plan to be assessed.
- 2) Further research should also be expanded to include more community colleges. While the colleges participating in this study were not similar in their demographic, much could be learned from researching many types of community colleges' enrollment management. Understanding initiatives at a broader study of community colleges would offer insight for contemporary literature on the subject.
- 3) One component omitted in this study was the role of the college president in implementing enrollment management. Having the perspective of why the leadership decided to create a culture of strategic enrollment management at their college may offer some understanding into garnering an institutional commitment college-wide. As I learned in this study, even though the college president has committed to the concept of enrollment management, the college community may not quickly embrace the concept.
- 4) Further research should offer a quantitative component to research on enrollment management in addition to the qualitative approach. Asking colleges to participate in a survey may offer a greater initial understanding of how colleges have translated enrollment management at their college. This

perspective will allow researchers to choose which colleges to visit and study further.

- 5) To eliminate natural bias that occurs in a study when the researcher is a professional in the field, a final recommendation is to include more than one researcher. Having the benefit of several researchers will allow one to collect data and another to analyze.

### Conclusion

As colleges face a decline in their funding due to economically forced budget reductions, they have been spurred into action. Some community colleges have turned to strategic enrollment management planning as a solution. While some colleges have found success using consultants from enrollment management companies, others are scrutinizing their own college to understand what improvements they can make with regard to recruitment and retention. This often results in the creation of a strategic enrollment management plan and the implementation of a committee responsible for this effort.

This research allowed a forum for community college professionals to share their best practices when initiating an enrollment management plan. This research allowed me to more fully understand the intricacies involved in such an undertaking. Not only do colleges need to have the commitment from the highest level of leadership, the entire college has to commit to this cultural shift in order for it to be successful. In addition to the commitment necessary, college administrators need to work collaboratively as decisions are made that impact enrollment. Having this level of commitment and collaboration will lay the foundation for a successful enrollment management initiative.

When discussing what was unsuccessful at the colleges when implementing enrollment management, a recurring theme of barriers became apparent. As we discuss best practices in enrollment management, we have to understand there will be barriers that arise as we deal with a decline in funding levels, the inability to hire additional staff, and build new buildings to accommodate an enrollment increase. This lack of control is frustrating and goes against the very culture an enrollment management effort attempts to create. What administrators can do to combat this frustration, however, is to maintain a level of transparency to decision making. Transparency can be achieved by keeping communication lines open among the college administrators responsible for enrollment management and who pass this information to the college staff.

Enrollment management is a new concept with community colleges. Often beginning an initiative such as this is daunting and overwhelming and begs the question, “where do we start?” The goal of this research was to offer community college practitioners interested in beginning their own effort a place to start and offer some insight into how to make enrollment management successful at their college. While this current study offers only a beginning as colleges enter into enrollment management, the critical components necessary to make an initiative successful included here will offer a guide to community college practitioners as they begin their journey.



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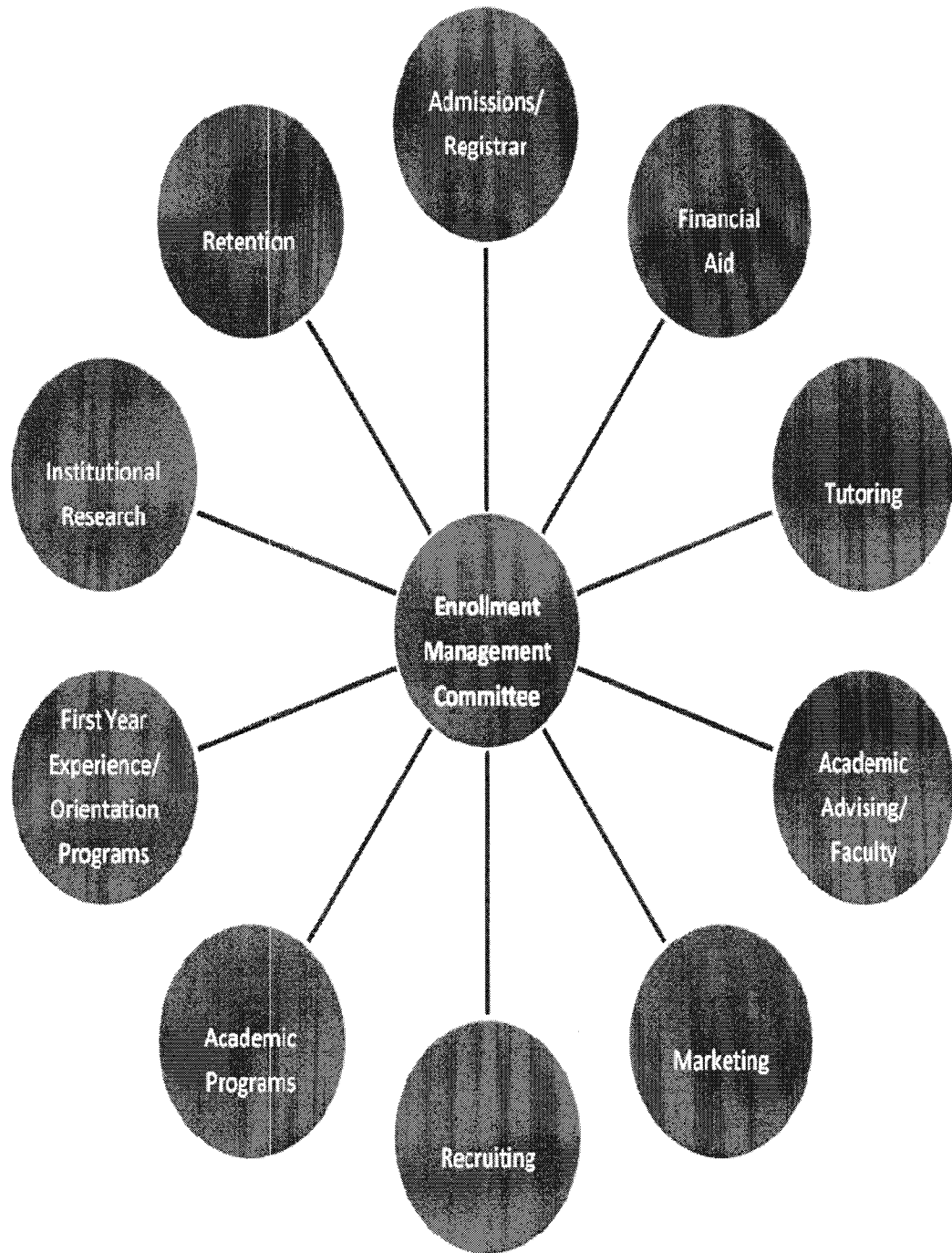
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APPENDIX A



## APPENDIX B

*Informed Consent Form*

*TITLE OF STUDY:* “Critical Components of Community College Enrollment Management Planning”

## RESPONSIBLE PROJECT INVESTIGATOR:

Dr. Edward “Ted” Raspiller, Interim Chair Educational Foundations and Leadership Program, Old Dominion University

## INVESTIGATOR:

Karen Hart Bucher, Doctoral Candidate, Old Dominion University

*WHY IS THIS RESEARCH BEING CONDUCTED?*

I am a doctoral student at Old Dominion University in the Community College Leadership program who is conducting this research study to complete the requirements for the PhD program.

*WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?*

You have been invited to participate in this research because of your involvement in your college’s enrollment management effort. Your input will be valuable in determining some critical components necessary for implementing enrollment management.

*WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?*

I am conducting this research to learn what some critical components are in community college enrollment management planning. This study has not been conducted previously and should provide valuable information to the body of academic research.

*WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?*

This study will occur on your campus and will take approximately 1.5 hours of your time. Following the interview/focus group that you participate in, I will send a copy of the transcript to you for review to ensure I captured your comments accurately. Your comments will be kept anonymous and will be reported in the aggregate.

*WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?*

You will be asked to describe your experiences with your college’s enrollment management effort. Your comments will be used anonymously in the study and your college will be given a pseudonym.

*DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?*

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time.

Page \_\_\_ of \_\_\_ Participant’s initials \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?*

You should not take part in the study if you do not have any experience with your college's enrollment management committee.

*WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE?*

There is no monetary cost associated with your participation in this study. You will be asked to spend approximately 90 minutes of your time to participate in a first interview/focus group. Approximately two weeks after the initial interview, I will follow-up with an e-mail to verify the accuracy of the transcripts and invite you to provide any final thoughts.

*WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?*

There will be no compensation for participation in this study

*WILL I BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?*

There are no direct benefits to participating in this study. The anticipated benefit of the research is that through presentation or publication of research results, community colleges, community college practitioners, and their constituencies will learn about some best practices in community college enrollment management. This understanding may help community colleges, community college practitioners, and their constituencies as they begin their own enrollment management initiative on their campuses by having information from those who have lived the experience of developing and implementing a plan on their campus.

*WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?*

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks. The only known potential risks are a) breach of confidentiality. Confidential interviews, pseudonyms, and safeguarding data will help minimize this risk.

If a breach of confidentiality occurs, the specifics of the breach will be immediately recorded and analyzed and a response designed with the primary objective of protecting the participant will be implemented.

*WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?*

Before you decide whether to participate in this research, please ask any questions you have. After our discussion if questions arise, contact me. I can be reached at [kbuch007@odu.edu](mailto:kbuch007@odu.edu) or 540.868.7132 or 540.539.1381.

If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Dr. Ted Raspiller at Old Dominion University.

Page\_\_ of\_\_ Participant's initials \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I PROVIDE?*

I will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. The information you provide will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When this study is written, I will write about the combined information that has been collected. You will not be identified in these written materials. This study may be published, however, your name and your college's name will be kept private. I will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you provided information, or what that information is.

*WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH?*

If you are injured as a result of this research, please contact Dr. Ted Raspiller within 180 days of the injury. He will provide information on how to proceed.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 4 pages.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person providing information to participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX C

## Demographic Information Sheet

1. Participant Name:
2. Participant Title:
3. How long have you worked at  
\_\_\_\_\_?
4. How long have you been a member of the college's enrollment management committee?
5. Were you selected/appointed/volunteer onto the enrollment management committee because of your position at the college? By whom?



## APPENDIX D

## Interview Protocol

Background Information

1. How long have you worked at \_\_\_\_\_ community college?
2. When did you become the college's enrollment manager? What was your career path leading up to this position?
3. What offices at the college report under your leadership?

Original goal of the enrollment management plan

4. Why did your college develop an enrollment management plan?
5. Define what your college's goals were in developing the plan (enrollment increase, managing students, etc.)

Enrollment management practices

6. Define enrollment management at your college. What are some of the key components to your initiative?
7. How are each of the components of the plan managed by your college? By whom?
8. What advice would you give another community college who was struggling to manage their enrollments during times of economic uncertainty?

Successes and challenges

9. Would you consider your enrollment management plan a success? Why/Why not?
10. What do you think have been the most successful components of your plan?
11. What have been some of the challenges you have faced with your plan or planning process?

Evaluation

12. What is different from the first year you implemented the plan to the most current version of your plan?
13. What are some of the best practices you think are unique to your plan?
14. Do you think they contributed to an enrollment increase?
15. How do you intend to evaluate your plan?

## APPENDIX E

## Focus Group Protocol

1. What do you think some of the strongest components of your enrollment management plan are? The weakest?
2. Why did your college implement a plan?
3. Did/how did you achieve institutional commitment?
4. What are some of the reasons your enrollment management plan is successful?  
Follow-up: Are there any particular tactics you have used that have been especially helpful with your plan? Not helpful?
5. What is different about the very first plan your college created versus the plan that you currently have?  
Follow-up: What were its strengths? Weaknesses?
6. Do you have a single or multi-year enrollment management plan? What are the pros/cons of both concepts?
7. What advice do you have for community colleges who are trying to implement a plan?
8. How will your college evaluate your enrollment management plan?

APPENDIX F  
CODE DEFINITIONS

<b>CODE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
History	History of the role and/or college environment
Competence	Skills the enrollment manager possesses that makes her qualified for the position
Design	Components that fall under the EM umbrella
Adaptability	Flexibility
Intentionality	Making decisions with purpose
Student Management	Process of managing student enrollments throughout their education
Growth	Growing college enrollment
Community Partnership	Aligning with those partners in the college external community to promote college
Community partnership (K-12)	Aligning with those partners in the college external community to promote college
Progressive	Forward looking and innovative
Total Investment	Achieving college commitment
Process simplification	Working on streamlining college processes to promote efficiency
Components	Aspects of the college enrollment plan
Responsive	Hearing community needs and responding to them
Partnership	Working within the college to achieve goals
Teamwork	Within the EM unit, working together to make progress for students
Relationships	Building connections with students
Barrier (student success)	What gets in the way of success
Barrier (space)	What gets in the way of success
Resistance	Push back from internal partners
Assessment (formal/data driven)	Evaluating success

<b>CODE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
Assessment (informal/anecdotal)	Evaluating success
Assessment	Evaluation success
Money	Financial aid issues
Resources (staff)	Need for additional staff
Resources (funding)	Need for additional funding, funding concerns
Resources (time)	Lack of time to work on college efforts, prioritizing concerns
Resources (space)	Lack of buildings, classrooms, offices
Alignment	Aligning strategic plan and other college plans with enrollment management plan
Definition	Defining EM at the college
Evolution	How role or plan has evolved over time
Advocate	Person on campus who takes the lead in the EM movement
Silos	Clear division of college responsibilities
Promotion	Marketing
Process Alignment	Having internal processes working in tandem for student success
Presence	Reputation in community
Unique	What sets college apart

## APPENDIX G

Code HeadingsCollaboration

Community partnership  
Community partnership (k -12)  
Partnership  
Teamwork  
Presence  
Alignment  
Process alignment  
Process simplification

Design of Enrollment Management Plan

Design  
Components  
Growth  
Evolution  
History

Barriers

Resistance  
Barriers (Staff, time, space, funding)  
Resources  
Money  
Total Investment  
Silos

Skill-set of Enrollment Manager

Competence  
Intentionality  
Progressive  
Assessment (formal)  
Adaptability  
Student Management  
Advocate

Communication

Responsive  
Promotion  
Relationships  
Assessment (informal)

## APPENDIX H

***Thematic Codebook***

<u><b>GCC</b></u>	<u><b>Code</b></u>	<u><b>Focus Group</b></u>	<u><b>Interview</b></u>	<u><b>Artifacts</b></u>
Institutional commitment	Total Investment	Then once the enrollment plan was developed by these folks, it had to go through the cabinet because it affects a lot of things outside the enrollment management unit.	With his vision we get the right people around the table to get it done and that is what makes us unique. Think of enrollment management as this big when it is really THIS big. Enrollment management is really the entire concept and when you look at it that way that is what makes it work.	Review of artifacts: meeting minutes, enrollment management planning documents
Collaboration	Intentionality	I don't think that is just about writing up a bunch of deadlines and expectations, but it is about a philosophy that infiltrates your entire college.	We decided we needed to have placement exams and strongly enforced cut-off scores in order to understand if the student was ready for college level work. That of course then sets a path for how students will flow into the college curriculum and we manage this very closely so the control is right at the placement testing office.	Review of artifacts: Marketing materials
	Community partnership	We have a k-12 partnership office that is an example. Her position is really about outreach out into high schools, and college readiness. I don't think that is just about writing up a bunch of deadlines and expectations, but it is about a philosophy that infiltrates your entire college.		Observation of college area, local shops have college advertisements posted.

	Teamwork	I think overall, in the suite that we are in, I think there has been much more collaboration and mindfulness about as things change that the communication gets out to as many people as possible. I think that as far as students go, we are doing our best to update our web as much as possible that is something the college is trying to do in a major way...putting more and more information out.	They manage it as a team. If there are issues and there sometimes are, let's say we have half of the financial aid staff out ill during our heaviest cycle. DEM will tell me about that and we have to bring in some temporary staffing. Especially if some of it is going to be more long term. Things like that, and I wouldn't call it crisis management, but issues that come up but need someone's attention at the highest level, the DEM will keep me informed.	Focus group Observational Notes
Communication	Responsive	I think instituting the deadlines and increased communication. With applicants and students as well as increased communication within the team	We are a big magnet of allied health here. In fact, one of out every twenty people live and work in the city, do something related to allied health in the city. Three years ago, we added polysonography, which is the study of sleep and ENDT, which is the study of brain waves. They have been very well received. We will probably add another 2 or 3 programs in allied health over the next 3 years depending on what their needs are.	Observational Notes: evidence of growth on campus--new construction
Barriers	Resources- Staff	And when I am busiest, so are the other student affairs staff are at their busiest so it is hard to pull folks from other units to make this work especially with the limitations in budget the state has given us.	It was more that we knew we had to do something to let the staff be less stressed especially in the crunch time right before the term begins.	



Design	Evolution	<p>But, really since I have been here in 2005 having a dean of enrollment management and PTA of other key positions that were fought for and won has made a big difference in succeeding. I don't think that there is ever one thing that makes something successful, I think there is always a combination of several factors together. Your people, your resources, and the leadership structure that says, "yes, we want you to buy into this", "we want you to go for new things".</p>	<p>It really started when XXX was named the dean of enrollment management. Under her auspices came all of the pieces that worked to help to flow enrollment. That is when we really first developed the plan. I would say that 10 years ago is when the plan first came into being. And now we are working on an iteration of this, it doesn't stay static and it doesn't need to be in order to serve our students well.</p>	
	Growth	<p>If you look at when that enrollment management dean position was created and the spike in enrollment and our growth. We are trying to adjust to a very rapid growth—we have increased our population by 50% in 5 years</p>	<p>These huge increases have been unbelievable to manage. We had a 15% enrollment increase in the fall and a 12% increase in the spring. We had a 50% enrollment growth over 5 years. We were 7500 students 5 years ago, we have 15000 now. That is HUGE. No one thought five years ago...we thought we would grow, maybe like 1%.</p>	<p>Observational Notes: New construction on campus; parking limitations for students, staff, visitors</p>
	Growth	<p>But, really since I have been here in 2005 having a dean of enrollment management and PTA of other key positions that were fought for and won has made a big difference in succeeding. I don't think that there is ever one thing that makes something successful, I think there is always a combination of several</p>		

		factors together. Your people, your resources, and the leadership structure that says, “yes, we want you to buy into this”, “we want you to go for new things”.		
Evaluation	Assessment	We do day to day tracking so that we can tell where we were last year and we know what to expect this year	The first piece is to do an assessment. Even a self-assessment or bring someone in. Bring someone in to get a thumb on the pulse of what are things like right now? A snapshot of what things are like. That uncovers strengths that you have.	
<u>PCC</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Focus Group</u>	<u>Interview</u>	<u>Artifacts</u>
Collaboration	Teamwork	I think it works because there is buy-in from the three offices that pull together. The Admissions Office , the Financial Aid Office and the ARC. We have put all those services at the Leavenworth Center and they have come under and we all buy in to the fact that this is enrollment management.	Then we also have them send to me once per month a report from their departments, things they have accomplished. Goals, too. We have kind of started with 2010 this concept of “cascading goals”. People were saying, how we link what we do every day to this big Strategic Plan.	Artifacts review: enrollment management meeting minutes
	process alignment	I think that our mandatory placement is one of the things we do really well. We have a lot of underprepared students and first-generation college students coming in and we are trying to place them where they can be successful	What we were finding, though, is that there were some students who we do need to advise. Those students who are on academic probation, we limit them to 12 credit hours and they cannot enroll on line. Students who have a GPA of less than a 2.0 cannot enroll on line, they have to come in. Those students HAVE to	Observational Notes: tour of facility indicated all services were presented in same area

			<p>see an advisor. Our students who are international students have to come in, our students who are flagged as athletes have to come in. So there are some populations...our honor students, have to come in. The Honors program wants them to come in. So, there are certain populations of people who have to come in for advising, but generally speaking if you are not in any of those categories, you don't have to come in.</p>	
	Teamwork	<p>We collaborate with them a lot and have meetings with them and their leads and our leads to make sure we are all on the same page. As the semester progresses, from pre-enrollment to graduation...to make sure we are all on the same page.</p>		
Intentional	Intentionality	<p>One of the things we have tried to do with that is, those students who had a GPA of less than a 2.0 to limit them to taking 9 credit hours. The intention was to retention. If we can keep them in school with even 9 hours, then you risk not losing them entirely. That can be controversial because some students need to be full-time to keep insurance. It can be helpful. I talked to one student who told me that keeping me at 9 hours "really helped me. I am</p>	<p>We try to move toward using standards to try to show that evidence, but that was too big a quantum leap for the crew. So, I thought I there must be a better way to ease that in. So my way of trying to ease that in was to say "show me the evidence. If you can show the evidence in any evaluation tool they lay over you to see what you have going on will work."</p>	<p>Observational Notes: Their services were all housed in the same unit. Students did not appear to be shuffled from building to building-- they could conduct most business in a central location.</p>

		back on track". It was a help for them to know that we wanted to keep them here but we were concerned about their GPA. Initially our data was scattered because we typically let a lot of folks take more than the 9, but now we have a pocket of folks taking 9 and we can see what has happened to them over a long period of time. It would have probably taken them 5 or 6 years to finish more than just the 3 or 4 that it would have taken them.		
Buyin	Total Investment	Even though we don't have the buy in from the academic side as much as I would like to see, we do the best we can with what we have been handed. We work really well as a team.	I think going back to institutional buy in. Folks not feeling like an add on every time you add a new plan. It feels like you are adding more on to my responsibility instead of just being part of what we do so trying to remove the add-on feeling. Getting the academic side to see it. I think they view it as a valuable component, I don't think they see it as equally as important as what they do in the classroom. I think if they would look at the research, it talks about how the student's out of class experience can have just as much impact on retention as what happens in the classroom. I think that all this stuff that we are doing that may be considered "peripheral" stuff, may be having as much impact on whether or not they stay. What they get involved in as	

			far as organizations here, and how they feel about being here.	
	Resistance	I don't feel that we, in the EMD department, have had a lot of input on the academic side. As far as the numbers of students going into certain programs, we can't say look at this program because enrollment is low. I think they are separate functions. I don't see them intertwined like they are at other schools that use the term enrollment management.	Getting the academic side to see it. I think they view it as a valuable component, I don't think they see it as equally as important as what they do in the classroom. I think if they would look at the research, it talks about how the student's out of class experience can have just as much impact on retention as what happens in the classroom. I think that all this stuff that we are doing that may be considered "peripheral" stuff, may be having as much impact on whether or not they stay. What they get involved in as far as organizations here, and how they feel about being here.	Observational Notes: The only representatives to attend the focus group were those staff that reported to the DEM/Registrar. Learning, IR, Outreach, etc. were not present at the meeting.
Evaluation	Assessment	If we have the data that suggests that those students who come and start classes two weeks after classes need more tutoring and more time catching up, if we submit that information for review, I think you have more of a foot-hold and a place to stand. But, if you just submit that information as an opinion and not supported by anything, folks tend to say "well that is interesting" but what do you have?	People would turn in STUFF! It would be "nice". I have one person who loves to go to chamber events, junior achievement events. All those are beautiful, but they do what? Did you talk to anyone about the school? And if you did, did they send us 10 more people? What happened? So that has been part of the challenge with us to turn all of that stuff into something we can use.	Their strategic planning and cascading goals documents were evidence they were taking strides in the direction of assessing their activities. They had data to support their activities and their requests that were based on the college's strategic plan and its goals.

<u>RCC</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Focus Group</u>	<u>Interview</u>	<u>Artifacts</u>
Leadership	Advocate	I think the DEM was really good about forcing our feet to the fire and identifying things to really look at, monitor, and then contemplate the kind of policies that might affect the things to change.		Artifacts review: meeting minutes, enrollment management planning documents
	Advocate	We have the state expert in enrollment management. The strongest component is her leadership. She pulls in other resources for us to look at for enrollment and also brings in some of the principles for viewing enrollment. She connects us and reminds us of what the strategic plan is and then in turn what the mission is and keeps us directed that way. That is a real strength in it.		
	Design		Well, when I got here to ECC, it was admissions, records, registration, and the testing center. Those included international student admission, heading up the advising initiative, placement testing, dual enrollment which we call "running start" in this state, graduation certification, credential certification, admissions and outreach and some publications.	

Collaboration		<p>As far as I know managers and administrators are behind it and in tune with it. Christine keeps us informed and she also keeps staff informed and has forums where people can engage and hear information and give information. In terms of faculty buy-in, I think we have a culture here where faculty don't have an understanding of or interest in the bigger picture beyond their own classes and sections. It is more that the direct service providers are not buying in, but I don't know if they need to do so, but there is, in my experience with teachers there is more a personalization of classes being canceled or sections being added. Those are all essentially enrollment bearing.</p>	<p>We have a table full of people are from instruction, administrative services, marketing, research, student services, student government, they are there. That is important . When I first got started here, it was mostly a marketing and admissions plan because we could not get buy in from other places which was part of the problem and why we were struggling.</p>	
	Intentionality	<p>I will say that one tactic that clearly has acted as a catalyst is Christine's identification of targets and numbers. Something concrete. I often thought that even though I have provided an awful lot of data for this along the way, that a lot of times things were not very concrete. We were hesitant to set targets and goals and I think by the identification of that, at least now there was a concrete number and we were going to seek to increase our enrollment</p>	<p>I would say in the past 5 years, it has really ramped into something more like what I sent you, which is tied in with our strategic plan and because we struggled for a while with our strategic plan---the college really struggled with it. You can't have a good enrollment management plan without a good strategic plan and a strong commitment to it. Really that is when things have sort of gelled.</p>	

		by 3% in this particular area and it was a starting point. We spent a lot of time just spinning our wheels, talking. It wasn't wasted time, but it wasn't moving forward. It was a little bit of a treadmill time.		
External Barriers	Funding Barriers	How do you manage something when you don't know what it is? Getting to the point where we said "ok, let's look at evening and online enrollments" was one of our discussions, but prior to that writing down and explicitly and agreeing upon those areas that were there and identifying any types of strategies that were in those particular areas...I think really that was the strong point. It's really like saying 'well our strong point was learning to walk after crawling, but we are there...we are walking'.	Well, when I got here and in the late 80s and early 90s had been a little rocky for enrollment for this college and we are a state where your funding depends on you reaching your enrollment target. WE do not have local funding here. This state funds its community colleges by a target identified by the state board; it has some trend and history to it. That is how you get to it.	
	Reporting Barriers	When we know that students are here to transfer and that number is growing and we say we want to manage it, well we also know that students self-report that and sometimes they don't accurately report that. We don't run off with several policies that will demand several resources. We might run into trouble with the errors associated with self reporting. It is the nature of community college, but four year institutions have the same	Way back when, our IR person and I looked at our first data cluster and we said "this is a mess" and we called it "dirty data". We had too many people entering things in by different definitions so we looked at it and one cell did not agree with another cell. A light bulb went on—in 1999 maybe—that made a huge difference.	Artifacts review: initial SEM plan had less data attached to It then plans as they evolved



		issues with the bakeries that we have. I won't pretend that one route is easy and ideal and we are just the difficult to manage, but because of many uncertainties, coming to some sort of an agreement about what policies to implement.		
Design	Growth	I suppose it's a difficult thing at any institution but particularly so when you have open admissions . The best way I would define it and probably the most general is, some kind of impact or attempting to control (fortunately we have been in growth periods over the last couple of years) but trying to, as best we can, influence the pattern of enrollment growth. That is intentionally vague because we are not very adept at doing it. The enrollment growth is also the multi faceted kind of thing. I don't want to pretend we have these complex ideas of how enrollment to manage the growth. Trying to manage something that is really amorphous and difficult to control.		
	Growth	This wouldn't be a recommendation, more like an observation really, but I think an institution that has had sharp increases or decreases in enrollment is much more motivated to think hard about this.		

	History		<p>Well, when I got here in the late 80s and early 90s it had been a little rocky for enrollment for this college and we are a state where your funding depends on you reaching your enrollment target. WE do not have local funding here. This state funds its community colleges by a target identified by the state board; it has some trend and history to it. That is how you get to it. If after a while you don't reach that goal, you are penalized. So, there is a lot of reason to do that as well just to look good and the desire to serve. I don't want to make it sound like we don't want to serve. The numbers game is important. So, there was a really strong sense of needing to do something. When I got here there was another person on campus and I had a really accommodating dean and we just said "we have to do something".</p>	
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## Appendix I

## Email Request to Participate in Research

Good morning \_\_\_\_\_

I am a doctoral candidate at Old Dominion University. I am working on a dissertation entitled "Critical Components of Community College Enrollment Management Planning" I would appreciate your participation in my study because you have developed an enrollment management initiative on your campus.

My study will involve a site visit where I will interview the enrollment management director, interview your enrollment management committee, and review your enrollment management plan and any planning documents.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please let me know as soon as possible. I am happy to provide any necessary documentation to your institutional research department you deem necessary.

Sincerely,

Karen Hart Bucher

## APPENDIX J

## Thank You for Participation in Research

Good morning \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for participating in my research study. I learned a great deal in my visit with you and your committee. I am attaching the transcript of both the interview and the focus group. I would appreciate your review of this document to ensure its accuracy. Please let me know if you would like me to make any changes or if you have anything to add since our meeting.

Again, I greatly appreciate the time you and your committee took to speak with me. I have learned a great deal during my research and look forward to sharing my results with you if you are interested.

Sincerely,

Karen Hart Bucher

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**KAREN HART BUCHER**


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**Education:**

**Old Dominion University**  
*Doctorate of Philosophy, December 2010*  
**Liberty University**  
*Master of Arts, September 2005*  
**Shenandoah University**  
*Bachelor of Science, May 1993*  
**Lord Fairfax Community College**  
*Associate of Arts and Sciences, May 1991*

Norfolk VA  
*Community College Leadership*  
Lynchburg VA  
*Human Services Counseling*  
Winchester VA  
*Psychology*  
Middletown VA  
*Education/Human Services*

**Higher Education Experience:**

**Lord Fairfax Community College ~ Office of Student Success** Middletown VA  
*Interim Vice President of Student Success (Aug 2010-present)*

- Provide college-wide supervision for all student services including: judicial, first year experience, tutoring, counseling, student life/activities, financial aid, testing, admissions, outreach, and enrollment management
- Responsible for office of public relations/marketing

**Lord Fairfax Community College ~ Office of Student Success** Middletown VA  
*Director of Enrollment Management (Dec 2007-present)*

- Supervise offices of Financial Aid, Admissions, Testing Center college-wide
- Managed college-wide enrollment management effort
- Provided academic advising to students during New Student Orientation program
- Served on presidential search committee

**Lord Fairfax Community College ~ Office of Student Success** Middletown VA  
*Coordinator of Financial Aid Programs (Nov 2004-Dec 2007)*

- Awarded over \$3M in aid annually, an increase of over \$300,000 in my tenure
- Implemented new scholarship database program
- Maximized office utilization of student information system
- Presented financial aid lectures to students, counselors, families
- Served as Chair of SACS Federal Updates Committee
- Instructor of College Success Skills

**Shenandoah University ~ Financial Aid Office** Winchester VA  
*Assistant Director of Financial Aid (March 1993-November 2004)*

- Trained all staff on financial aid program information
- Managed college-wide Direct Loan Program
- Certified over \$17 million in student loans annually
- Served on student information selection committee
- Packaged all undergraduate and graduate students

**Presentations and Publications:**

- Patton, R.C. & Bucher, K.H. (2008) In Pursuit of Higher Education. Police and Security News, March 2008.
- Bucher, K.H. & Patton, R.C. (2008) In Search of an Online Education. Police and Security News, September 2008.
- Bucher, K.H. (2008). Rural, Suburban, Urban Community Colleges: Similar or Different? Noel-Levitz National Conference, Chicago IL.
- Bucher, K.H. (2001) Reconciliation Best Practices. Presented at Annual Direct Loan Conference, Houston, TX.