The Unheralded Hero: Mid-Level Manager Training and Development in Student Affairs, A Case Study Analysis

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THE UNHERALDED HERO: MID-LEVEL MANAGER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN STUDENT AFFAIRS,

A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

by

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B.S. May 2009, Old Dominion University
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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Approved by:
Cynthia Tomovic (Director)
Petros Kastsioloudis (Member)
Ellen Neufeldt (Member)
ABSTRACT

THE UNHERALD HERO: MID-LEVEL MANAGER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN STUDENT AFFAIRS, A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Sherri Watson
Old Dominion University, 2020
Director: Dr. Cynthia Tomovic

Mid-level managers are the largest administrative group, yet the most professionally underdeveloped, in the organizational structure on college campuses. Mid-level managers are responsible for navigating and communicating to those both above and below them in the organization. The challenge in this three-part mixed methods study was to determine the impact of a short-term training intervention on mid-level manager self-efficacy. Specifically, the training intervention was a week-long residential professional development Institute which focused on the following areas: free speech, cultural competency, budgeting and strategic planning, collaboration and partnership, and leading/managing/followership-navigating the political landscape. In the first, a quantitative phase, secondary data analysis was conducted on the Institute’s post survey results of 63 participants. The second qualitative phase included follow-up structured interviews designed to assess participants’ belief that the Institute helped to improve their ability as mid-level managers. In the third, a quantitative phase, an ad hoc survey was administered and analyzed to determine the influence of the Institute on participants’ self-efficacy. A total of 12 individuals (20%) responded for participation in the structured interviews and ad hoc surveys. Descriptive statistics were used to report findings from the structured interviews and coded using NVIVO software. Themes were clustered and coded to develop a model of the skills, relationships, and dispositions necessary for participants to improve their self-efficacy in their roles as mid-level managers at their respective institutions. The results
indicated that it is essential that mid-level manager develop specialized skills, relationships, and dispositions if they are to create greater clarity in their roles, become more solution focused, and improve communications that allow them to make more meaningful contributions to the field of student affairs. Furthermore, educational level was found to correlate with mid-level manager self-efficacy. Overall, results suggest that mid-level managers showed a significant increase in self-efficacy, over time, after having attended the Institute.
This dissertation is dedicated to two individuals who made me who I am today. The two people who originally instilled my love and passion for education, my grandparents, the late Mr. Raymond H. Norman, Sr. and Mrs. Lois E. Norman. You both demonstrated first-hand how hard work and a dream can change your life course. You expected nothing less than my best. You loved hard and gave me experiences and taught me lessons that are invaluable. While neither of you are physically here, you have been with me every steps of this doctoral journey. I am who I am because of you both. I love you; I miss you, and most of all; I thank you.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I would like to acknowledge my dissertation committee members-Dr. Cynthia Tomovic, Dr. Ellen Neufeldt, and Dr. Petros Katsioloudis- for your unwavering support and commitment to my success. Dr. Tomovic, you are much more than the chair of my committee. In you I have found a second mom and you provided me with encouragement during some of my most vulnerable times. Ellen, you have always been relentless in your support of a doctorate degree. I remember our initial conversations about me going back to school and I am grateful for your consistent inspiration and listening ear. You are truly a mentor to me. Dr. K., thank you for being a calming voice throughout this season. You constantly reassured me during summer institute, and I don’t think you know how much that meant when I was doubting myself. To all of you, my sincerest thank you!

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best nephews anyone could ask for. I hope you know that you can achieve anything, and this is just the beginning of doctors in our family. I love you both.

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To my colleagues, friends, and family, thank you! The constant reaffirmations, both verbal and written, mean so much to me. It certainly does take a village and I am grateful for each and everyone of you.

Getting a doctorate degree is one of the hardest, yet most rewarding, things I’ve ever done. I have been humbled immensely and reminded constantly why I am doing it. As a first-generation college student, the odds were stacked against me. However, with God, all things are possible. I am reminded of a quote, “ultimately, it is a blessing to be able to complain about getting a PhD.” This degree is not just for me, this is for all the other black girls and boys, who are first-generation, and are reminded by society that we aren’t enough and wonder if we belong
in higher education (WE DO!) This is our degree. I will remain committed to the work of seeing us succeed. #blackgirlmagic #blackexcellence
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Employee development is a critical component of institutional progress, growth, and maturation (Bryan, Faulkner, & Mather, 2009). Intentional leadership training assists companies in succession planning that promotes organizational sustainability. One way to provide development for managers is through formal leadership development programs. Generally, there are two intended outcomes of these types of programs: one, advance and further develop leadership skills in participants and two, strengthen participants’ knowledge in fundamental leadership areas (Black & Earnest, 2009). Leadership development programs are fundamentally centered on andragogy and social learning. Both theories provide a foundational understanding of best practices for engaging adult learners and are particularly important in implementing and developing training and development (Catalfamo, 2010; Black & Earnest, 2009).

Effective leadership is directly correlated to the long-term health of post-secondary institutions. Understanding leadership development in the context of higher education is imperative to sustainability and the advancement of colleges and universities (Catalfamo, 2010; Bryan, et.al, 2009). In corporate, or the “business world,” intentional leadership training and development is a focus for management positions. Individuals are not promoted into managerial positions without proper cultivation (Laipple & Morris, 2015). General leadership characteristics sited for effective managers are problem-solving, coaching, and communication (Ackerman, Holt, & Wolverton, 2015).

There is limited research in the area of higher education leadership training and development for mid-level managers. Few mid-level managers have formal training and there is no comprehensive way to assess the outcomes of training for those that do receive training. The
average rate for mid-level manager burnout is 6 years (Laipple & Morris, 2015). In order to recruit and retain quality leaders, institutions should rethink the leadership pipeline and be intentional about leadership development for mid-level managers. This requires a cultural shift and focusing on organizational learning specifically for mid-level managers (Alfred et al. 2002). The unique and complex role of the mid-level manager requires strategically designed development to enhance their professional career trajectory. Research from Adams-Dunford, Cuevas, and Neufeldt (2019) state the following:

Middle managers are defined as experienced professionals with significant responsibilities and that they often lack final authority on decisions. Mid-level managers implement and execute senior management priorities, enact parts of the university’s mission or goals, can supervise one individual or an entire department, and bridge various levels of the campus hierarchy. Middle managers often represent the largest percentage of administrators in college/university systems and have the most complex position in the structure. They are information disseminators between new professionals and senior leaders, bridging the gap with chief student affairs officers (policy makers). Some challenges of the mid-level manager position include, but are not limited to, acclimating to campus culture, staff supervision, and learning the new role. Many organizations spend time onboarding and training new professionals and senior leaders, but often times the middle group is not prioritized. This is also termed as the “barbell approach” - heavy on the ends, but light in the middle. Special consideration should be given to this group as they are the largest group with an increasingly complex role. (p. 2)
Statement of the Problem

Due to the complexity of the mid-level manager role, training is critical to improving individual and organizational performance outcomes (Bryant et al. 2009). As such, the purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of a short-term intervention on mid-level manager self-efficacy. The results will inform institutions, senior leaders, and mid-level management of successful leadership development opportunities for individuals in the student affairs division of higher education.

Hypotheses

The research study was designed to confirm the following hypotheses:

H₁: Mid-level managers enrolled in the short-term intervention will develop a better understanding of the skills, relationships, and dispositions required to provide meaningful contributions to their role as a student affairs administrator.

H₂: The use of a short-term intervention will have a positive effect on mid-level managers’ self-efficacy as it relates to their role as a mid-level manager in student affairs.

Background and Significance

Established training and development programs are critical to organizational success, and leadership advancement. Training and development are defined as, “a process of systematically developing work-related knowledge and expertise for the purpose of improving performance” (Holton & Swanson, 2009, p. 456). The result of training is increased knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes that assist individuals to work more effectively and, in turn, enhance organizational performance. Additionally, proper training and development help to ensure that competent employees are recruited and retained. Learning specialized knowledge and skills to
advance the organization is an important outcome of the training process (Holton & Swanson, 2009; Noe, 2017).

Individuals in leadership and management positions require an elaborate skillset and high-level thinking. Managers are responsible for employee and team performance, employee development and learning, resource planning, coordinating activities, decision making, developing trust, and promoting work to constituents (Noe, 2017). In order to effectively navigate those responsibilities, sufficient training is necessary. Leadership development programs are a means of providing management training (Black & Earnest, 2009).

For training to be advantageous, best practices should focus on adult learning strategies. Andragogy and social learning are two theories that guide and inform training and development. Developed by Malcolm Knowles, andragogy utilizes a problem-solving approach to learning. Knowles theorized that adults learn best through relevant learning experiences that are interactive and when adults are intrinsically motivated. Motivating factors include professional advancement, fulfilling expectations for oneself, and improving one’s ability to serve the community (Black & Earnest, 2009; Catalfamo, 2010).

Social learning theory or observational learning was developed by Albert Bandura. This theory postulated that through vicarious learning, observing others, is a best practice in learning. The literature states, “Modeling behaviors assist the individual’s learning through exposure to guides. (Black & Earnest, 2009, p. 185). Leadership development programs allow participants the opportunity to learn relevant timely information through observation and interactive learning experiences, both critical for retention of information (Black & Earnest, 2009).

In addition to there being a lack of training opportunities for mid-level managers in student affairs, one criticism of existing professional development for mid-level managers is that
the training is not grounded in adult learning theories and learning models, and that there is an inadequate process to effectively train and develop individuals. Based on mid-level manager’s responses in Keim and Sermersheim’s research, some of the primary skill areas in which they would like to receive more development were personnel management, fiscal management, and leadership skills. Respondents preferred to receive development through a combination of conferences, workshops, and in discussions with colleagues. The study also found that the functional area in which the mid-level manager works impacts their professional development needs. For example, managers in student affairs activities indicated that they wanted more development in budget/fiscal operations (2005).

As a result of the complexity of the mid-level manager role and that the mid-level manager profile evolves over time, developing these individuals is critical. According to Keim and Sermersheim (2005), mid-managers today are characteristically different from those in previous decades. There are more women than men in the field; more mid-level managers have graduate degrees (master’s and doctoral) than in previous decades; and more mid-level managers average a greater number of years, averaging 10 years. Bryan et al. (2009) referred to mid-level managers in higher education as “…anonymous leaders and unheralded heroes” (p. 244). Mid-level managers greatest challenges are interpreting and voicing the institutional vision from senior leaders, and then being responsible for motivating direct reports. Mid-level managers, however, though responsible for communicating the strategic goals and vision of senior leaders, have little formal authority. Navigating such ambiguous terrain requires quality training (Belch & Strange, 1995; Bryan et al.; 2009; Tabrizi, 2013).
Limitations

The limitations to this study are provided below.

1. This study, as a case study, focused on participants’ experiences in one leadership development program.

2. This study interviewed individuals more than a year after completion of the leadership program. Other factors may influence responses during the gap in time.

3. This study lacked randomized treatment and control groups. The researcher only focused on individuals who attended the Mid-level manager Institute sponsored by the Southern Association of College Student Affairs (SACSA) and the Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education (NASPA) region III.

4. This study lacked matched samples in the Institute post survey and the ad-hoc survey.

Assumptions

The assumptions of this study are provided below.

1. Participants who elected to take part in this study meet the requirements of mid-level manager level in student affairs.

2. Participants who elected to take part in this study attended the entire residency leadership development program held at Emory University in Atlanta in 2018.

3. Participants were given the curriculum, activities, and secondary information at the Institute. There was no difference in schedule or instruction for those who attended the Institute.
Definition of Terms

The following terms were used in this research study:

- **Andragogy**: A core principle of adult learning that focuses on a problem-solving approach to learning. This theory states that adults need to understand the why and the value behind learning new knowledge (Black & Earnest, 2009).

- **Collaboration/Campus Partnership**: “Interrelationships between all the components within the system and the people that work in it” (Maguad, 2018, p.229).

- **Disposition**: “Prevailing tendency, mood, or inclination” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

- **Free Speech**: Offers guaranteed protection for offensive speech (Miller et al., 2017).

- **Higher Education**: College or university level education where advanced studies are pursued (Cambridge, n.d.).

- **Leadership Development**: “The activities that improve the skills abilities, and confidence of leaders” (HRZONE, n.d.).

- **Leadership**: Aligning people in an organization toward a shared goal and vision, concerned with motivating and inspiring (Kotter, 2001).

- **Management**: Accomplishing a plan or goal through problem solving, organizing, and monitoring and is concerned with organizing and staffing (Kotter, 2012).

- **Mid-level manager**: “A resource not only for new professionals but also for the senior level administrators looking for wise counsel and reliable efforts towards influencing students and their learning” (Adams-Dunford et al. 2019, p.3).

- **Multicultural Competence**: “The ability to be culturally sensitive and responsive, coupled with the multicultural awareness and knowledge essential to creating multicultural competence” (Mueller & Pope, 2001, p. 134).
• Relationships: “The way in which people are connected” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

• Self-efficacy: “Concerned with how people judge their capabilities and how, through their self-percepts of efficacy, they affect their motivation and behavior” (1982, p. 122).

• Skills: Abilities that allow individuals to succeed in a job (Doyle, 2019).

• Social Learning Theory: Observing others to improve behaviors. Also known as “observational learning” (Black & Earnest, 2009).

• Strategic Planning/Budgeting: A process whereby organizational change and resource management are investigated and adjusted to ensure that both align with the institution and society (Doyle & Brady, 2018).

• Student Affairs Professionals: Individuals committed to educating students outside of the classroom through programs, services, and experiences that will advance the students in other areas of their lives (Long, 2012).

• Training and Development: The largest area of human resource development that constitutes creating and implementing work-related information, expertise, and processes with the goal of improving performance (Holton & Swanson, 2009).

**Procedures**

The study employed a mixed methods approach, using both a case study analysis and statistical analysis to understand the components and structure of the development program, and, the participant narratives and responses regarding the efficacy of their roles as mid-level managers post participation in the leadership Institute. A case study approach allows the researcher to examine in-depth phenomena that are bound by a period of time, activity or event, or place (Hays & Singh, 2012). Specifically, this study utilized a single case study approach where one phenomenon was researched (Hays & Singh, 2012). The quantitative portion of this
research involved conducting secondary data analysis on surveys that the Institute administered immediately after the completion of their program. Supplementing the secondary data analysis, the researcher followed-up with post structured interviews, and with a post ad hoc survey. Mixed method is a research methodology that encompasses collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data. The purpose of this form of research is to provide better context and understanding of the research problem. (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative portion of this research involved structured interviews with participants using a pre-existing instrument, and a follow-on ad hoc survey that utilized the Institute’s pre-assessment measures.

Final survey data and curriculum materials from the 2018 Mid-level manager Institute held at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia were obtained by the researcher from the Institute’s director. The Institute’s assessment survey was composed of eleven questions in Likert form. To supplement the reported results, the researcher conducted follow-up structured interviews and an ad hoc survey with participants about their experiences.

Given that existing data from the final report of the 2018 Mid-level manager Institute was used to understand the effectiveness of the specific program, additional structured interviews was utilized to gain a better understanding of participant experiences and Institute efficacy. The existing final report data was analyzed using interval data of the six institutional themes: mid-level manager role, cultural competency, strategic planning, budgeting, managing up, and partnership.

The quantitative process of this study involved analyzing three factors of the participants: educational level, institute type (public or private), and research type (R1, R2, or R3) compared with the Institute pre-assessment questions to ascertain if there was a significant relationship among the variables. The Kruskal-Wallis H-test was used to determine if there are statistical
differences between two or more groups of independent variables (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). Analyzing and understanding differences between groups provided knowledge of potential differences and similarities in training opportunities based on varying factors and groups. This information will further support the need for targeted training and development for mid-level managers.

For follow-up data collection, the researcher scheduled one on one interviews with participants who volunteered to discuss their experiences in further detail. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and reported in the aggregate. Interviews took place either in person or virtually via WebEx software. Structured interviews were most appropriate as this allowed the researcher to ask standardized questions of all participants and to remain neutral throughout the process. A post ad hoc survey was administered to the interviewed participants to assess similarities and differences between the Institute’s pre-assessment survey data with the data gathered by the post ad hoc survey.

Employing a case study approach using interviews and existing data can inform the researcher about the phenomenon of leadership development for student affairs professionals. A comprehensive understanding of thematic takeaways along with participant narrative experiences followed by an ad hoc survey can advise the student affairs field of best practices regarding mid-level manager development.

**Summary**

This research study investigated the gap in training and development practices in the student affairs field, specifically for mid-level managers. Due to the complexity of the mid-level manager role, training is critical to improving individual and organizational performance improvement (Bryant et al., 2009). This study described the mid-level manager role in higher
education, and the need for practical, relevant, and timely training for those who serve in that capacity.

Formal training and development are lacking for mid-level managers in student affairs. Thus, there is the capability to be intentional in developing these leaders. Due to the wide array of responsibilities, and lack of formal authority, mid-level managers seek development in several sectors including, personnel and fiscal management, and leadership skills (Keim and Sermersheim, 2005). Development can happen in a variety of formats including formal training Institutes, conferences, and mentorship opportunities. Identifying areas where mid-level managers feel they need development, and providing scalable training, will help to develop mid-level managers in their role, and thus, contribute to the institution’s overall health and longevity.

A further discussion of best practices in leadership development, the role and complexities of the mid-level managers, and leadership training within the academy including academic and student affairs positions are provided in Chapter II, the Review of Literature. In Chapter III, the methods that were used to collect, interpret, and analyze data on mid-level manager experiences at a leadership development Institute are discussed. The results of the analysis are provided in Chapter IV and the Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations are included in Chapter V.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Training and development are essential for employee growth and institutional health. This chapter provides information on the history and purpose of training and development, the use of leadership development programs within the context of higher education, and specific knowledge areas that enhance mid-level manager self-efficacy in their leadership role and, in turn, provide meaningful contributions to organizational performance improvement and to the field of student services.

Introduction

Training and development have a distinctive connection in the field of human resource development and has progressed into a sophisticated field of study. Education, training, and organizational development together encompass the field of human resource and organizational development (Holton & Swanson, 2010).

Human resource development and training continues to evolve and develop to meet the demands of the changing organizational culture. As such, human resource development (HRD) and organizational development (OD) have been significant pillars in the training environment. Human resource management (HRM) was created in the 1980’s with the function of solving labor issues. In the HRM role, interactions were functional and technical. For example, these exchanges included information about benefits, compensation, labor relations, and training and development (Gibson & Ruona, 2004). Training in this manner was directly related to a person’s specific job and emphasized change in behavior as a result of the training. Organizational development (OD) is defined as the growth and development of organizations and large systems.
Human resources have since evolved to meet the strategic goals of the organization, but also to adequately prepare employees to be successful.

**Purpose of Training and Development**

Established training and development programs are critical to organizations and leadership advancement. Training and development are defined as, “a process of systematically developing work-related knowledge and expertise for the purpose of improving performance (Swanson & Holton, 2009, p.456).” Specifically, development is concerned with “the planned growth and expansion of knowledge and expertise of people beyond the present job requirements” (Holton & Swanson, 2009, p.456). The result of training is increased knowledge and performance in order to assist individuals work more effectively and, in turn, enhance the organization. Additionally, proper training and development ensures that competent employees are recruited and retained. Learning knowledge and skills to advance the organization is an important outcome of the training process (Holton & Swanson, 2009; Noe, 2017).

Training and development, however, not only supports the individual in their role, but also has large scale impacts on businesses. Two goals of human resource training and development are individual and organizational learning and performance improvement. When employees gain knowledge and skills to perform their job successfully, it increases human capital (Holton & Swanson, 2009; Noe, 2017). Human capital is defined as, “the knowledge, advanced skills, system understanding and creativity, and motivation to deliver high quality services” (Noe, 2017, p.1).

Training is beneficial for a variety of reasons. It assists organizations in meeting goals, assists employees in job improvement, creativity, readiness, growth, and facilitates organizational learning (Holton & Swanson, 2009; Obisi, 2011). Training is necessary because it
allows employees opportunities for job promotion, which ultimately increases earning potential and job security (Holton & Swanson, 2009; Obisi, 2011). There are two types of training processes: on-the-job and off-the-job training. On-the-job training is usually facilitated by supervisors, colleagues, or mentors, while off-the-job training is more formal and could include external consultants, external training establishments, or guest speakers (Obisi, 2011).

**Training Model**

The designing and implementation of training should be carefully constructed. ADDIE, (analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation), a universally known training model, is often used as the developing structure when designing training curriculums (Hodell, n.d.). ADDIE was adapted from the engineering systems approach to solving problems. After having identified the problem, the training process begins with an analysis of the problem which serves as input to the training design, development, implementation, and evaluation processes which also serves to verify the impact of the training, or the output (Hodell, n.d.; Holton & Swanson, 2009). Figure 1 provides a visual of the ADDIE model.

![ADDIE Model](image)

*Figure 1. ADDIE Model. From “The AADDIE Model of ISD,” by Training Industry, 2013*
Leadership Development Programs

Leadership development programs are a type of training designed to expand and advance the skill base of organizational leaders. Not only are leadership development programs critical to organizational success, purposefully constructed programs also improve employee job satisfaction and performance (Braun et al., 2009). Although there is limited research in how learning is transferred back and implemented, the presence of senior members at mid-level manager training has been shown to help mid-level manager better understand the vision and realities of their respective organizations, as they can then translate this information to their respective roles and help to advance their organization through the lens of a mid-level manager (Cacioppe, 1998).

Transfer of training is defined as, “how individuals transfer learning from development program to the workplace in a lasting manner” (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2011, p. 130). Programs that are skillfully designed have long-term impact. This means, participants are able to translate the information into everyday work (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2011). De Lisi et al.’s study of the Rutgers Leadership Academy demonstrates the impact of such a program. The researchers found that attendees were able to shift their thinking as a result of attending the two-year Institute. Participants originally thought of leadership as control and at the end of the Institute, were able to understand the culture of leadership and management (2018). Per Ashbury et al., professional development reflects institutional commitment to employees and ultimately, to the students (2015). Ashbury et al. (2015) provide a concise and reasonable explanation: “the steadfast commitment to professional development ensures that an institution is forward-thinking, committed to its team, and recognizes how professional development benefits the most important individual, the student” (p.2).
Role Ambiguity of Mid-Level Managers

Mid-level managers are often responsible for taking the vision of senior leaders and translating it for new professionals (Adams-Dunford, et al., 2019). Specifically, in higher education, mid-level managers have an added dilemma as institutions of higher education are some of the most intricate, complex, and complicated systems (Adams-Dunford, et al., 2019; Ellis & Moon, 1991). Effective leadership development is one way to sustain post-secondary institutions (Catalfamo, 2010). In general, mid-level managers feel underprepared in their roles as the definition of a mid-level manager is difficulty to define (Mills, 2000). Higher education institutions should carefully consider how they train and prepare their mid-managers for the world of management. In addition, there should be targeted leadership development programs woven into the fabric of human resources to avoid the “barbell” approach to training which typically provides training and leadership development opportunities to new professionals and senior leaders, but little to those in the middle (Adams-Dunford, et al., 2019; McKinney et al., 2013).

The competency framework for training identifies the skills, activities, and knowledge to perform successfully in one’s job (Training Industry, n.d.). The literature states that competency isn’t solely focused on technical skills, but includes soft skills (problem solving, motivation, cognitive abilities) if one is to be able to perform adequately. Competency also involves the ability to employ skills in appropriate situations (Asame & Wakrim, 2018).

Conceptual Framework

The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) has identified core competency areas for student affairs professionals: personal and ethical foundations; values, philosophy, and history;
assessment, evaluation, and research; law, policy, and governance; organizational and human resources; leadership; social justice and inclusion; student learning and development; technology; and advising and support (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). Per NASPA and ACPA (2015), “the 10 professional competency areas presented in this document lay out essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected of all student affairs educators, regardless of functional area or specialization in the field” (p. 7).

This study focused on the competencies necessary for mid-level managers in student affairs and utilized the assessment tool developed by the directors of the 2018 Mid-Managers Institute. The tool identified five main competency areas that mid-level managers need in order to better understand their mid-level manager role, to be able to reflect on their leadership definition, and the impact of their perception of leadership on the mid-level manager role. The core competencies connected to these outcomes are free speech, cultural competency, strategic planning/budgeting, collaboration, and leading/managing. Figure 2 represents the conceptual model as it relates to the outcomes.
Incidents of racial tension and bias have been steadily increasing on college campuses (Miller et al., 2017). Higher education institutions are receiving requests from polarizing political figures to speak on their campuses (Pulcini, 2018). The climate on campuses is growing divisive as a result of the current political climate. It has been suggested that the most recent national election ushered in a culture of offensive beliefs and biases, which are now, permeating campuses (Kruger, 2017; Knight Foundation, 2018). Specifically, campuses are experiencing stress around free speech and inclusion (Knight Foundation, 2018). In response, student protests and demonstrations against commencement speakers and conservative groups emerge to counteract bias (Knight Foundation, 2018). Bias is defined as “conduct, speech, or expression that do not involve criminal conduct (as cited in Miller et al., 2017), whereas hate crimes are ‘crimes of violence property damage, or threat that is motivated in whole or in part by offenders’
bias based on race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, gender, or physical or mental disability” (Miller et al., 2017). Microaggressions are defined as “brief everyday interactions that send denigrating messages which are subtle and insidious” (Miller et al., 2017). The role of free speech is crucial to higher education and confusion regarding the legal repercussions is normal, though particularly during this climate (Chemerinsky & Gilman, 2017; Olgethorpe & Preston, 2018). Staff and administrators want concrete, finite language when developing policy related to free speech that does not currently exist (Chemerinsky & Gilman, 2017).

Free speech plays a tremendous role in higher education. It offers guaranteed protection for offensive speech, much to the concern of faculty, staff, and students (Miller et al., 2017). Per the first amendment, the government is not able to censor freedom of expression (Pulcini, 2018). If this does happen on a college campus, there can be legal ramifications. Conservative white supremacist, Richard Spencer, recently visited Auburn’s campus and set a precedent for colleges and universities regarding free speech. Auburn declined Spencer to speak on the campus citing safety concerns. A federal judge reversed the decision and permitted Spencer to speak on Auburn’s campus (Pulcini, 2018). The response to incidents of bias has led to the development of bias response teams, which are typically led from student affair’s divisions. Bias response teams are committees that review and respond to racial or bias incidents on college campuses when it is not at a criminal level (Miller et al., 2018).

Colleges and universities must continue to be proactive in protecting free speech. The University of Chicago’s 2015 statement is one example (Smarick, 2018). An excerpt from The Chicago Statement can be found in figure three below. Another forward move was at Princeton where they required a book to be read before starting the semester for incoming students (Smarick, 2018). The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) lobbies across
campuses and universities for First Amendment rights protected on campuses (Smarick, 2018). Student affairs professionals and senior leaders must think about several factors when responding to bias; they face the challenge of creating inclusive environments that promote free speech (Chemerinsky & Preston, 2018; Miller et al., 2018). Per Pulcini, it is the role of the student affairs professional to “encourage critical and honest evaluation of all forms of expression; teach acceptance; and provide evidence to the campus community of how destructive and harmful hateful expression can be (2018, p. 26).” The administrator must encourage “moral conversations” that allow students to learn and help develop and practice civility in discourse (Kruger, 2017; Pulcini, 2018, p. 27). Students must be exposed to varying viewpoints in order to think critically (Olgethorpe & Preston, 2018). Administrators must also determine what is protected speech versus speech that poses safety hazards or threats to the campus community (Chemerinksy & Gillman, 2017).

The Knight Foundation in collaboration with the Gallup Institute and the Newseum Institute conducted a survey to gauge student perceptions of First Amendment rights on campus (Knight, 2016). While the results indicated that students prefer campuses to be open and inclusive to encourage expression, many students approved of restricting certain speech such as hate speech (Knight Foundation, 2018). Today, most political and social discussions are now taking place in a virtual environment, via social media, versus in public places on campus (Knight Foundation, 2018).

If campus protests occur, the Southern Poverty Law Center recommends that students hold a counter event away from the speech that is in question that allows space for discussion and reaction (Kruger, 2017; Pulcini, 2018). Texas A & M took this approach with Richard Spence by displaying a wall where students could write expressions of unity (Pulcini, 2018). At
the institutional level, messaging should be crafted that supports students, reaffirms the college or university values, and denounces racially charged speech. Senior level administrators are the leaders in this area (Olgethorpe & Preston, 2018).

“Because the University is committed to free and open inquiry in all matters, it guarantees all members of the University community the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn . . . [I]t is not the proper role of the University to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive.”

—Excerpt from the Chicago Statement

Figure 3. Excerpt from the Chicago Statement. From “Adopting the Chicago Statement,” by The Fire, n.d.

### Cultural Competency

The accelerated shift in student demographics suggests that the enrollment profile of students is changing; more than 1 in 5 undergraduates are students of color (Pope, et al., 2009). Between 1976 and 2012, the percentage of minority students doubled and continues to increase (Evans & Chun, 2016). Specifically, between 2009 and 2011, African American and Hispanic undergraduate student enrollment increased. Largely, by 2060, the percentage of Caucasians that make up the United States will be 43% (Evans & Chun, 2016). This drastic and continual shift in minority students will persist on college campuses, reiterating the need for administrators, at all levels, to be culturally competent. In general, multicultural competence is necessary for effective leadership (Belch & Strange, 1995; Musamali & Martin, 2016; Woodward et al., 2000).

Many student affairs professionals and graduate students receive minimal training in multicultural issues and are underprepared to work in multicultural environments (Mueller & Pope, 2001; Pope & Reynolds, 1997; Wilson, 2013). Multicultural competence is defined as
“the ability to be culturally sensitive and responsive, coupled with the multicultural awareness and knowledge essential to creating multicultural competence” (Mueller & Pope, 2001, p. 134). Additionally, employee performance evaluations rarely include multicultural competence criteria (Major & Mangope, 2014). Per Papalewis, as cited by Major and Mangope (2014), “ultimately one’s ability to lead effectively and efficiently is based on the ability to understand and respect individual differences: to be ethical, one must be respectful” (p. 24). The evolving dynamic of higher education institutions requires professionals to have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to work with culturally diverse populations (Mueller & Pope, 20001; Pope & Reynolds, 1997) and will assist in having “multiculturally sensitive and affirming campuses” (Mueller & Pope, 2001, p. 134).

Pope and Mueller’s research (2001) recommends that training and development on multicultural competence and racial consciousness should occur for student affairs professionals with all levels of professional responsibility. Cultural competence is necessary in order to serve students and support institutions ethically. It also allows for quality and respectful interactions with those who may differ culturally (Pope & Reynolds, 1997). Traditionally, responding to multicultural situations on campuses was given to diversity experts, but now it is encouraged for everyone, at all levels of the institution, to be able to have these conversations (Wilson, 2013). Per Pope and Reynolds (1997), “institutions are in need of professionals who are capable of solving problems, managing diverse environments, and delivering effective services to a student body…” (p. 268). The development of multicultural competence and skills is an ongoing process and requires additional training for faculty and practitioners (Pope & Mueller, 1997). Attending workshops, conferences, reading articles and research on diversity are ways in which to enhance the multicultural competence of student affairs professionals (Wilson, 2013). This preparation
will ultimately lead to a multicultural environment on campus that leads to positive student experiences and outcomes (Major & Mangope, 2014).

**Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills**

Common language surrounding multicultural competence is significant, particularly in higher education and for student affairs practitioners (Castellanos, 2007). While it is the role of the student affairs worker to create inclusive spaces, training and leadership in this area remains limited (Castellanos, 2007). It is required that student affairs administrators have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities of different cultures and backgrounds to be able to integrate them into campus culture (Castellanos, 2007). Another area of multicultural competence that is highly researched is gender. Student affairs workers need to be aware of how multicultural competencies differ by gender (Castellanos, 2007).

In Castellanos’ study of 100 student affairs professionals (2007), she found that males reported higher multicultural awareness as compared to their female colleagues. Gender, age, or socio-race did not significantly predict skills; rather, knowledge was found to be most indicative of skills (Castellanos, 2007). Finally, age of the professional, years at the university, and years in the profession were not correlated with multicultural awareness, knowledge, or skills (Castellanos, 2007).

**Strategic Planning/Budgeting**

**Historical Context.** In the early days of postsecondary education, strategic planning was primarily a budget-driven process focused on fiscal operations and planning (Hamilton, 2012). The strategic planning process materialized in the 1970’s and 1980’s as a result of enrollment instability, changes in student demographics, and funding concerns (Hamilton, 2012). Thus,
strategic planning became a way to utilize data and outcomes as a proactive solution-oriented approach (Hamilton, 2012).

In its infancy, strategic planning was solely used to articulate mission and prioritize resources. However, there wasn’t much focus on improving university culture (Hamilton, 2012). In addition, accrediting commissions increased their focus on colleges and universities to demand accountability. Therefore, assessment standards and learning outcomes were tied to the strategic planning process (Hamilton, 2012). In a paradigm shift, these commissions required institutions to have a strategic plan that was reflective of assessment and met accrediting requirements (Hamilton, 2012). In the same manner, state and federal government funding appropriations was tied to the planning process as well (Hamilton, 2012). The strategic plan is a direct method of ensuring an institution is accountable to the stated mission (Hamilton, 2012).

**Mission, Values, and Vision.** The mission statement is the guiding principle of any strategic plan. Per Hamilton (2012), “this statement delineates, in concise language, why the institution exists and what its operations are intended to achieve. For publicly controlled institutions, this statement of purpose may be dictated by the state, but for all institutions the statement serves as the explanation for the existence of the organization” (p. 9). Preciously, mission statements were long and exhaustive, but now are concise and basic statements of purpose (Hamilton, 2012).

Value statements outline the core of what the institution stands for and how it operates. Many institutions have programs that support the values of the institution (Hamilton, 2012). Essentially, a value statement says, “these are the characteristics we believe are important in how we do our work” (Hamilton, 2012, p. 9). Arguably, one of the most important facets of a strategic plan is its vision statement. The purpose of a vision statement is to articulate the future
of the institution clearly. The goal is to ensure that all stakeholders understand where the institution is headed (Hamilton, 2012). Per Hamilton, “the mission and vision statements provide the two ends of an analytical view of the institution from which the strategic plan is developed” (Hamilton, 2012, p. 10). Figure 4 provides components of a strategic plan.


Strategic planning is a process whereby organizational change and resource management are investigated and adjusted to ensure that both align with the institution and society (Doyle & Brady, 2018; Ellis, 2010). Strategic planning has been part of higher education institutions across the country for decades (Auld, 2010; De Lourdes Machado & Taylor, 2006). In the post-secondary environment, strategic planning is usually led by institutional leaders, namely the president. However, it is important that the mission and vision behind the plan be reflective of all the stakeholders at the institution including faculty, staff, and students (Auld, 2010; Garner,
Professionals who plan and operate strategically, not only assist the resource management of the institution, but also work towards optimal student benefits (Ellis, 2010).

In higher education, strategic planning usually involves revisiting the mission and values and rewriting goals that align with them. It also includes analyzing the current situation, understanding internal and external environmental influences, and deciding on a plan of action (Hassanien, 2017). In higher education, the strategic planning process is impacted by a variety of factors, including government policies and technology innovation (Garner, 2013; Hassanien, 2017). Per Hassanien (2017), “the challenges which higher education institutions are facing nowadays raise the high demands to develop a new and innovative model for strategic analysis and planning that aims to help them cope with these enormous challenges and ensure sustainability” (p. 1). In addition, institutions are taking care to plan due to increasing faculty, staff, and student issues, stakeholder engagement, and increasing tuition costs along with state and federal policies (Garner, 2013). These are major indicators of institutional strategy and leadership. Colleges and universities are continuing to adapt to these changes and organizational restructuring is part of the planning process (Garner, 2013).

**Budgeting.** A basic understanding of managing a budget is a fundamental skill for administrators within all levels of the institutional organization (Barr & McClellan, 2011). Mid-level managers must have knowledge of how funds are generated, spent, and how it relates to larger institutional goals and strategy (Adams-Dunford et al., 2019). Funds are regularly allocated relevant to institutional short- and long-term goals and mid-level managers have a responsibility to be aware of the available resources (Adams-Dunford et al., 2019). Per Fey and Stanley (1996), one of things most critical to a mid-level student affairs manager’s job is managing funds.
Without a strategic plan, organizations lack clarity and priority. A strategic plan is a living document that should change when necessary (Kladivko & Poisel, 2017). Although it can be challenging developing policies with many constituents and stakeholders (De Lourdes Machado & Taylor, 2006), a well-planned strategy can enhance the institution’s reputation (Auld, 2010). Strategy is continually being refined within higher education systems and the planning process will always be part of the post-secondary landscape (Doyle & Brady, 2018). Figure 5 provides an overview of the strategic planning process in higher education.

![Figure 5. Strategic Planning Process in Higher Education. From “Strategic Planning in Higher Education, a Need for Innovative Model,” by Hassanien (2017).](image)

**Collaboration/Campus Partnership**

Early in post-secondary education, the work of student affairs was done by faculty administrators and later developed into a specialized unit (Frost, Strom, Shultz, & Holland, 2010; Grace, 2002). The development of student affairs as a specific practice area has led to challenges regarding collaboration and campus partnerships. Other obstacles include the cultural differences and missions of academic affairs and student affairs, a lack of understanding of the role of the
other unit, and academic learning is seen as primary compared to student affairs co-curricular learning opportunities (Frost et al., 2010). Due to these reasons, there was little interest in collaboration or partnership (Cho & Sriram, 2016).

Partnership is defined as, “an understanding and agreement of two or more parties that they will work together on a given problem, task, or enterprise” (Grace, 2002, p. 8). Collaboration is defined as, “interrelationships between all the components within the system and the people that work in it” (Maguad, 2018, p.229). Campus partnerships and collaborations are essential to student learning and a combined curriculum between academic affairs and student affairs allows for an enhanced learning process (Cho & Sriram, 2016; Grace, 2002). Moreover, collaboration is essential in understanding and implementing a shared university vision (Maguad, 2018). Ideally, campuses will have a system where all appropriate departments and components work together to achieve shared goals; a notion known as optimization (Maguad, 2018).

The siloed experiences of early post-secondary education hindered student learning. Academic and student affairs must continue effective partnerships that aid in student success (Frost et al., 2010). Effective collaboration allows for better student experiences with faculty and understanding of shared vision and outcomes (Frost et al., 2010). The goal of collaborative relationships is to continue academic and engagement opportunities for students both inside and outside of the classroom (Frost et al., 2010). Some examples of successful collaborations and partnerships include, first-year experience programs, learning communities, service learning, orientation programs, academic support, and residential programs (Cho & Sriram, 2016; Frost et al., 2010).
Seamless learning requires cooperation and collaboration and benefits the student learning experience (Cho & Sriram, 2016; Kezar, 2003). Cho and Sriram’s research, which focused on student affairs and academic affairs collaboration, studied 221 student affairs professionals and found that level of education, position, and perception of institutional collaboration, predicted the level of collaboration (2016). Understanding both the academic and student affairs culture is vital before a collaborative relationship can develop (Cho & Sriram, 2016). Per Grace, “capacity is built through creation of partnerships” (2002, p. 9).

**Organizational Structures and Collaborations.**

Kezar (2005) studied eight organizational areas that contribute to collaborative partnerships on college campuses. These areas are campus mission, networks of staff and faculty, supportive structures, rewards and incentives, collaboration support by senior administrators, external group pressures, campus values, and initiatives that promote learning (Kezar, 2005). These areas are critical as resources are decreasing and more agencies are requiring outcomes that must utilizes a collaborative approach (Kezar, 2005).

A mission that explicitly supports collaboration is a great asset in integrating it into the foundation of how the institution functions. It is not enough to have a mission statement, but it must be lived and practiced among faculty and staff (Kezar, 2005). Another concept important for collaboration/campus partnerships are networks. For collaborations to be effective, relationships must be developed. Kezar (2005), defines networks as, “a coalition, alliance, or complex set of relationships among a group of people that is useful in accomplishing a present or future goal” (p. 53). Networks take many forms (such as, getting buy-in for a project). Once networks are established, it will make it easier for others to willingly join and work together (Kezar, 2005). “Networks provide not only social but intellectual resources, the cognitive
complexity needed to overcome barriers that emerge within the redesigned system” (Kezar, 2005, p. 54). Rewards and incentives also promote collaboration. Some examples include awarding of grants or administrative assistance (Kezar, 2005). When senior-level administrators embrace a culture of collaboration, it helps others understand that collaboration is a campus priority. External groups, such as foundation boards or accrediting agencies, also create pressures for collaborations on campuses. Decreased resource allocation forces campuses to work together to achieve shared goals (Kezar, 2005). Finally, values of the institution and the learning structure can enhance collaborative efforts. Values that are innovative and student centered generate an atmosphere of cooperation. Additionally, campuses that create opportunities where faculty and staff can collaborate are ideal. An example includes centers for teaching and learning where faculty can gather to engage in collaborative activities (Kezar, 2003).

**Leading, Managing, Followership and Navigating the Political Environment**

**Leading, Managing and Followership.** Leadership and management are two complimentary systems that are often used interchangeably. However, there are differences in the two terms and varying leadership and management styles (Kotter, 2001). While management is the process of organizing and staffing within an organizational structure, leadership is aligning individuals within an organization (Kotter, 2001). Leadership includes communicating direction, strategy, mission, and vision. Leadership is also concerned with motivating and inspiring team members to influence change (Kotter, 2001). Per Hope (2015), it is imperative to balance leadership and management as a student affairs leader. Based on Hope’s research, management is concerned with the appropriate use of fiscal resources, while leadership is concerned with motivating employees towards a shared goal (2015).
There is minimal consistency in leadership education and development and a clear universal approach does not exist (Allen, Shankman, & Haber-Curran, 2016; Katz, 2000; Northouse, 2018). The literature describes essential skills that leaders should espouse such as being emotionally intelligent and possessing a variety of skills [human, technical, and conceptual] (Allen et al., 2016; Katz, 2000). Emotionally intelligent leadership is, “awareness and regulation of emotions in self and others” (Allen et al., 2016, p. 80). This is critical as leaders must navigate difficult problems, situations, and conflict and research shows that mid-level managers are the most unprepared to manage workplace conflict. (Allen et al., 2016; Cooper and Boice-Pardee, 2011). It is also imperative that individuals embrace leadership from a collaborative approach versus one based on power and authority (Astin & Astin, 2000).

Leadership should be intentional and value-based, not one where change is random. It is critical, as a leader, to be directed towards a desired goal or attribute (Astin & Astin, 2009). In addition, Rao (2013) discussed the importance of soft leadership skills in management. He noted that it involves caring, connecting, and communicating with people to achieve desired goals. Soft leaders focus on the “people” skills instead of being task oriented. The opposite of soft leadership skills are “hard” skills where leaders use threats and intimidation to meet goals (Rao, 2013). He identified eleven characteristics of soft leaders: character, charisma, conscience, conviction, courage, communication, compassion, commitment, consistency, consideration, and contribution (Rao, 2013).

**Leadership Styles and Job Behaviors.** Being an effective leader and manager can improve job performance, satisfaction, and outcomes. Colquitt and Piccolo explored how followers’ views of their jobs impact transformational leadership. The authors used Hackman and Oldham’s core job characteristics (variety, identity, significance, autonomy, and feedback)
as a framework. The study focused on the perception of the job duties in comparison to a transformational leadership style. The authors utilized a quantitative survey (Likert style) to measure job characteristics, task performance, and organizational citizenship behavior. A randomized sampling of individuals from a variety of job categories (administrative, computer networking, and education) were selected as participants (2006).

The authors found that transformational leadership was significantly related to the perceptions of core job characteristics, task performance, and organizational citizenship behavior. All three attributes also were related to intrinsic motivation and goal attainment. A major takeaway from this study was that followers who had exceptional leaders thought their jobs were more challenging, and also more important (Colquitt & Piccolo, 2006).

Rad and Yarmohammadian (2006) investigated the relationship between leadership style and employee job satisfaction. Utilizing descriptive and cross-sectional survey designs, the study used participants from twelve hospitals. Questionnaires were sent to both employees and managers and data was collected for a month. The study used Rensis Likert’s model of leadership styles as a theoretical framework. Based on this model, there are four practices that leaders use to positively impact organizational performance: exploitive authoritative, benevolent authoritative, consultative, and participative.

The findings showed that the main leadership style was participative. Employees job satisfaction was correlated with the leadership style of the manager, particularly in the employee-oriented dimension. Employees demonstrated more satisfaction with factors such as the nature of the job, coworkers, and supervision.

Leadership and management do not exist without followers (Hollander, 1992; McCallum, 2013). Per Hollander, “followers have the potential for making significant contributions to
successful leadership” (1992, p. 44). Researcher shows that the relationship between leaders and followers can impact the organization and their roles (Baker, 2007). There is a psychological relationship between leaders and followers that requires followers’ needs to be met so a positive relationship can continue to flourish (Baker, 2007; Hollander, 1992). Simply put, leadership and followership qualities are interdependent (Baker, 2007). McCallum (2013) identified eight traits of good followers: judgement, work ethic, competence, honesty, courage, discretion, loyalty, and ego management.

**Navigating the Political Environment**

Mid-level managers are organization stabilizers and promote innovative and informational change. In fact, mid-level managers have the greatest potential to enact change on college campuses (Ackerman, 2007). However, it is critical that mid-level managers be able to successfully navigate the politics of higher education, specifically their campus culture. Mid-level managers must obtain strong political ingenuity and awareness of influencers on campus. This includes both formal and informal catalysts of change at their institutions (Adams-Dunford et al., 2019).

Per Bolman and Deal’s research (2017), higher education is one of the most tumultuous organizations due to the multiple layers of governance. Thusly, building a network of support and understanding how to effectively manage the landscape is imperative. In addition, mid-level managers must be able to identify opponents, partners, and personal agendas during critical decision-making periods. Motivation is another component of navigating the political climate. Knowledge of what is motivating the university, leadership, and campus partners will assist in better understanding the cultural terrain (Adams-Dunford et al., 2019).
Self-Efficacy

Albert Bandura (1982) studied the notion of perceived self-efficacy. Based on Bandura’s research, self-efficacy “is concerned with how people judge their capabilities and how, through their self-percepts of efficacy, they affect their motivation and behavior” (1982, p. 122). Per Bandura, efficacy is not fixed but requires the cognitive, social, and behavioral ability to make the right actions (1977; 1982). Bandura’s work also encompasses self-system, which is the ability of individuals to have control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions (Pajares, 1996). Regarding self-efficacy, Bandura (2009) stated:

Human behavior is extensively motivated and regulated through the exercise of self-influence. Among the mechanisms of self-influence, none is more focal or pervasive than belief in one’s personal self-efficacy. Unless people believe that they can produce desired effects and forestall undesired ones by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Whatever other factors may serve as guides and motivators; they are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to produce desired results. (p. 179)

Per Bandura’s self-system and efficacy theories, beliefs in one’s competence impacts behavior (Pajares, 1996). Specifically, in two main ways: 1) people engage in tasks that they feel confident that they can complete, and 2) people determine how much effort they want to spend on an activity. A higher amount of self-efficacy is leads to greater effort, persistence, and resilience (Pajares, 1996). In general, individuals with low self-efficacy perceive things to be harder, while those with high self-efficacy create a feeling of calm in difficult situations and gain greater expectations and confidence in their abilities. These situations are known as mastery experiences (Bandura, 2009; Pajares, 1996).
Bandura (2006) further explained the concept of developing self-efficacy in areas where individuals intentionally foster it and the level at which it is cultivated. Self-efficacy needs to be tailored to a specific area of functioning in order to be developed; there is no one-size fits all (2006). With this knowledge, it is critical that competencies be cultivated in mid-level managers to enhance their perceived self-efficacy so that they can provide meaningful contributions to their role as student affairs administrators.

**Self-Efficacy, Performance, and Leadership**

The relationship between leadership self-confidence and successful leadership is one frequently studied in literature. In fact, it has long been studied in the area of sales, particularly self-efficacy and performance (Carter et al., 2018). Self-efficacy impacts performance in several ways. First, it impacts one’s belief in reaching his or her goals. Second, it increases the locus of control that one must complete the goal. Third, self-efficacy implies that the effort will end successfully (Carter et al., 2018). One explanation of this relationship is the social cognitive theory developed by Albert Bandura (McCormick, 2001). Bandura’s theory posts that in understanding leadership three variables should be taken into consideration: leader cognitions, leader behaviors, and leadership environment (McCormick, 2001). Leadership cognition is reflective of the individual’s self-efficacy in relation to the leadership task (McCormick, 2001). Figure 6 is a visual representation of social cognitive theory.
Social cognitive theory further asserts that individuals control their thoughts, motivation, and behaviors. In addition, social cognitive theory assumes the person is goal directed and proactively involved in shaping the environment (McCormick, 2001). Self-efficacy is a variable within the theory that posits that individuals believe they have the personal abilities and resources to meet the demands of the task (McCormick, 2001).

**Conclusion**

Chapter II reviewed the literature related to the history and purpose of training, and the function of leadership development programs as a training intervention. Specifically, this chapter focused on the leadership development program sponsored by National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and Southern Association of College Student Affairs (SACSA) that was tailored towards the development of mid-level managers in the student affairs field. Specific competencies as they related to mid-level managers’ perceived self-efficacy were
discussed. The literature review resulted in the development of a conceptual framework that guided the methodology discussed in Chapter III.
CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter discusses the methods and procedures used in this study. Specifically, a discussion of the population, research variables, design, methods of data collection, and analysis are provided.

The purpose of this study was to determine if a short-term professional development intervention impacts mid-level manager self-efficacy in their mid-level manager role in student affairs. Specifically, this study examined a one-week, residential, mid-level manager Institute, targeted for student affairs professionals, sponsored by the Southern Association of College Student Affairs (SACSA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. The study sought to understand if the short-term intervention, hosted by SACSA and NASPA, provided participants with the skills, relationships, and dispositions that could enable them to make contributions in their role as mid-level managers in student affairs.

A mixed methods research design was used to investigate the research hypotheses. Mixed methods are a methodology that encompasses collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative research. The purpose of this form of research is to provide better context and understanding of the research problem. (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative portion of this research involved structured interviews with participants using a pre-existing instrument. The quantitative portion of the research involved conducting secondary data analysis from previously obtained post-survey data, followed by a post ad hoc survey.

The qualitative process of this study adopted a single case study approach using both pre-existing self-report survey data and structured interviews. Per Hays & Singh (2012), “a case study allows the researcher to study individual(s), events, activities, or processes/elements of a
bounded system” (p. 44). Additionally, “case studies are distinguished from other qualitative traditions because cases are research in depth and the data are delineated by time period, activity, and place” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 44). This research used a single case study which is defined as, “the examination of one phenomenon that is a single experiment and should meet the criteria for testing a theory with a case” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 46). The study also utilized an ad-hoc survey approach. Ad hoc research is conducted for a specific point in time and is not continuous (Association for Qualitative Research, n.d.).

The quantitative process of this study involved analyzing three factors of the participants: educational level, institute type (public or private), and research type (R1, R2, or R3). The Kruskal-Wallis H-test was used to determine if there were statistical differences between two or more groups of based on the independent variables (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). Analyzing and understanding differences between groups provided knowledge of potential differences and similarities in training opportunities based on varying factors. Additionally, the differences in means in the post Institute survey and the follow up ad hoc survey was calculated using a two-sample t-test with equal or unequal variance. The assumption of normally distributed difference scores (check for equal variance) was conducted using the Hartley test.

Final data from the 2018 Mid-level manager Institute, held at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, was requested by the researcher from the Institute’s director. The final report data was composed of eleven questions in Likert form. To supplement the report results, the researcher conducted follow-up structured interviews with participants about their experiences, as well as conducted an ad hoc survey. See appendix A for post-intervention survey conducted by the Institute. The questions were reused in the ad hoc survey. See appendix B for interview questions. See figure 7 for the mixed methods process model.
Figure 7: Mixed methods process in the study of mid-level manager short-term intervention

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses guided the methodology to determine themes relevant to the skills, relationships, and dispositions acquired as a result of the Institute. The question asked was whether these thematic areas affected participants’ development of self-efficacy in regard to their role as a mid-level manager in student affairs.

H1: Mid-level managers enrolled in the short-term intervention will develop a better understanding of the skills, relationships, and dispositions required to provide meaningful contributions to their role as a student affairs administrator.

H2: The use of a short-term intervention will have a positive effect on mid-level managers’ self-efficacy as it relates to their role as a mid-level manager in student affairs.

Survey Instruments and Interview Protocol

The Institute post-survey was developed by a mid-level manager director at the Institute in 2016. It focuses on the predetermined learning outcomes that the Institute established. Per the Institute, it “offers an opportunity for mid-level professionals to enhance and develop the skills,
relationships, and dispositions that distinguish them in the profession and enables them to make more meaningful contributions to the people and programs they serve” (R. Reilly, personal communication, February 7, 2019). During the Institute, “participants will have the opportunity to learn from faculty mentors, guest presenters, and their mid-level colleagues” (R. Reilly, personal communication, February 7, 2019). See appendix A for Institute’s post-intervention survey.

In addition, to the post Institute survey, the researcher created a post-Institute interview protocol that was used to conduct structured interviews that were designed to assess participants’ belief that the Institute helped to improve, or not, their abilities as mid-level managers. The questions were worded in an open-ended manner to allow for authentic, narrative responses from participants. See appendix B. In addition to the structured interviews, the researcher created an ad hoc survey that was administered to the interviewees. I was used to analyzed to determine the influence of the Institute on participants’ self-efficacy. See appendix D.

**Institute’s Post-Intervention Survey Participants**

The population sampled for this study were mid-level student affairs professionals who attended the 2018 Mid-level manager Institute held at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Student affairs professionals are defined as, individuals committed to educating students outside of the classroom through programs, services, and experiences that will advance the students in other areas of their lives (Long, 2012). The Institute is sponsored by the Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education (NASPA) and the Southern Association of Student Affairs Professionals (SACSA). The participants met the mid-level manager qualification to participate in the Institute; five years as a mid-level manager in the field of student affairs with supervisory experience of at least one staff member. All participants were student affairs professionals at an
American college or university located in the southern region of the United States. Institutional types represented were public and private; graduate, professional, and undergraduate focused institutions; and research 1 (R1), research 2 (R2), and research 3 (R3) level colleges or universities. A total of 49 institutions were represented at the Institute, with 13 states from the Southern Region of the United States.

The Institute sent a post-intervention questionnaire to a listserv of 63 attendees via the Qualtrics online survey software one week after the conference. Confidential responses were kept in a secured file, with no identifying information, and were provided to the researcher to support this study. Participants’ ages ranged from under 30 to 49, with 63% identified as female and 47% identified as male. Regarding race and ethnicity, 40% identified as African American, 47% as Caucasian, 11% as Hispanic/Latino, and 2% as Multiracial. All participants earned a graduate or professional degree; 59% reported a master’s degree, 11% reported a doctorate, and 29% are in the process of obtaining a doctorate.

**Post Structured Interview and Post Ad Hoc Survey Populations**

The researcher collaborated with the Institute director to acquire names and email addresses of the attendees from the 2018 cohort. The researcher contacted via email the attendees and invited them to participate in follow-up structured interviews to discuss their experiences in more detail. The email invitation included the background and purpose of the study, researcher contact information, and informed consent. See appendix C. The invitation was sent to the entire listserv of attendees. A total of 12 individuals responded for interviews. The structured interviews took place via WebEx software and in-person. In addition to agreeing to participate in the structured interviews, the same participants agreed to participate in an ad hoc survey that used the same questions that appeared in the Institute’s initial post-intervention survey.
Research Variables

The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) identified general core competency areas for student affairs professionals: personal and ethical foundations, values, philosophy, and history, assessment, evaluation, and research, law, policy, and governance, organizational and human resources, leadership, social justice and inclusion, student learning and development, technology, advising and support (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

The short-term intervention, on which this study is based, focused on free speech, cultural competency, strategic planning/budgeting, collaboration/campus partnership, and leading/managing/followership. Free speech plays a tremendous role in higher education. It offers guaranteed protection for offensive speech, much to the concern of faculty, staff, and students (Miller et al., 2017). Multicultural competence is defined as “the ability to be culturally sensitive and responsive, coupled with the multicultural awareness and knowledge essential to creating multicultural competence” (Mueller & Pope, 2001, p. 134). Strategic planning/budgeting is a process whereby organizational change and resource management are investigated and adjusted to ensure that both align with the institution and society (Doyle & Brady, 2018). Collaboration/campus partnership is defined as, “interrelationships between all the components within the system and the people that work in it” (Maguad, 2018, p.229). Leadership is concerned with aligning people in an organization toward a shared goal and vision, and for motivating and inspiring subordinates (Kotter, 2001). Throughout the Institute, each of these themes were addressed through small group discuss, one-on-one sessions with faculty, and formal presentations.
**Data Collection and Field Work Strategies**

Existing data from the Institute was used to conduct a secondary analysis to better understand the effectiveness of the specific program. The existing data were analyzed using the five institutional themes: free speech, cultural competency, strategic planning/budgeting, collaboration/campus partnership, and leading/managing. Structured interviews were utilized to gain a better understanding of participant experiences and Institute effectiveness. Nvivo software was used to code for major themes and patterns from the structured interviews. Participants in the structured interviews were also sent an ad hoc survey based on the same measures as the Institute’s post-intervention survey.

As follow up to the Institute’s initial data collection, the interviewer scheduled one-on-one interviews with participants who volunteered to discuss their experiences in further detail. Prior to starting the interviews, the participants were given an informed consent and read an opening statement by the researcher. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and reported in the aggregate. The interviews were recorded via an application on a locked cell phone and uploaded to the transcription software. The transcription software used to code for themes and patterns was NVIVO. NVIVO is a qualitative analysis computer software that is designed for rich text information and large data. Example of data analyzed with NVIVO include interviews, focus groups, surveys, social media, and journal articles (NVIVO, n.d.). Structured interviews were most appropriate as this allowed the researcher to ask standardized questions of all participants and remain neutral throughout the process. After conducting the structured interviews, the researcher sent an ad hoc survey to the participants to further understand the direct impact of the Institute on mid-level manager competencies and self-efficacy. The research
explored the five institutional themes: free speech, cultural competency, strategic planning/budgeting, collaboration/campus partnership, and leading/managing/followership.

Employing a mixed methods approach using quantitative analysis of existing Institute data, results of follow-up structured interviews, and results of a follow-up ad hoc survey informed the researcher about the impact of the Institute’s mid-level manager development program on student affairs professionals. A comprehensive understanding of thematic takeaways, from the Institute’s post-intervention survey, along with the structured interviews that probed participant narrative experiences, along with the follow-up ad hoc survey can advise the student affairs field of best practices regarding mid-level manager development using a short-term development program.

**Summary**

This chapter provided details regarding the methodological design and procedures to complete this research study. The population for this study were mid-level student affairs managers who attended the 2018 Mid-level manager Institute at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. This study employed a mixed methods approach based on pre-existing survey data from the Institute on which a secondary data analysis was conducted, results of one-on-one structured interviews, and an ad hoc survey that was collectively used to determine how the Institute impacted participants’ development of skills, relationships, and dispositions that enhanced their ability as mid-level student affairs at their respective institutions. A comprehensive report of the findings is presented in Chapter IV.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The mixed methods design for this study was intended to explore the effectiveness of a short-term intervention for mid-level student affairs managers as a means for them to develop the necessary skills, relationships, and dispositions that ultimately impacts their self-efficacy and as it relates to their ability to make meaningful contributions to their respective institutions and to the field of students affairs generally. The mixed methods design included three phases. The first, quantitative phase, involved conducting secondary data analyses on the Institute’s post-intervention survey data. The second, qualitative phase, involved conducting post Institute interviews with participants who agreed to participate in the structured interviews. The third, another quantitative, phase included conducting a post ad hoc survey with those participants who participated in the structured interviews.

Phase 1: Quantitative-Secondary Data Analysis of Institute’s Post Survey Results

Participant Profile

Of the 63 participants who attended the institution, majority were female (63%) and were from public institutions (82%). In addition, most participants completed a master’s degree (60%). The institution type is reflected in Table 1, highest degree earned in Table 2, research type in Table 3, years of experience in Table 4, and gender in Table 5.
Table 1

_Institution Type of Participants_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
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</table>

N=44

Table 2

_Highest Degree Earned of Participants_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Earned</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuing PHD</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=62

Table 3

_Research Type of Participants_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Type</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research 1 (R1)</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research 2 (R2)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral/Professional (D/PU)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College/Two Year</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges/Universities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=44

Table 4

_Participant Years of Experience_

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years or less</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=63
### Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( N=63 \)

### Institute’s Post Survey

Eleven questions followed a Likert-style scale using a five-point measure: 1=strongly agree, 2=moderately agree, 3=moderately disagree, 4=strongly disagree, and 5=neutral. The survey yielded an 80% response rate and questions focused specifically on understanding the mid manager role, specific skills learned at the Institute, leadership definition, strategic planning and budgeting, enrollment trends, conflict conceptualization, management, and collaboration.

**Skills, Relationships, and Dispositions.** Seven questions inquired about participants’ skills, relationships, and dispositions acquired to make meaningful contributions to the field of student affairs. The first question addressed if participants felt they learned specific tips for being a successful mid-manager. All participants responded either strongly agree (84%) or moderately agree (16%) \( (M=3.84, SD=0.36) \). The second question explored participants’ ability to reflect on how they add value to their organization. While 2% responded moderately disagree, 86% responded strongly agree and 12% responded moderately agree \( (M=3.84, SD=0.41) \). The third question addressed if the participants have a better understanding of strategic planning and their role in it. While 4% responded moderately disagree, majority responded strongly agree (58%) and moderately agree (38%) \( (M=3.54, SD=0.57) \). The fourth question also addressed strategic planning from a departmental level. Most of the participants strongly agreed (62%) or moderately agreed (34%) while few participants moderately disagreed (4%) \( (M=3.58, SD=0.60) \).
The fifth question investigated participants’ understanding of enrollment trends and budgeting. Although 6% responded strongly disagree, 60% of participants responded strongly agree and 24% responded moderately agree ($M=3.54$, $SD=0.32$). The sixth question addressed participants’ understanding of collaboration. Most respondents replied with strongly agree (46%) and moderately agree (48%), while 4% responded with moderately disagree ($M=3.42$, $SD=0.57$). The final question addressed an understanding of collaboration from a vice president’s lens. Although 6% responded moderately disagree, 44% responded strongly agree and 48% responded moderately agree ($M=3.38$, $SD=0.59$). See Table 6 for survey results of skills, relationships, and dispositions.

**Mid-level manager Self-Efficacy.** Four survey questions examined participant mid-level manager self-efficacy. The first question addressed having a better understanding of the role of a mid-manager. Majority of participants replied strongly agree (48%) or moderately agree (46%) ($M=3.42$, $SD=0.60$). Another question addressed the participants’ ability to reflect on their personal definition of leadership and the impact it has on the mid-level manager role. While few participants responded moderately disagree (6%) and strongly disagree (2%), most participants responded strongly agree (62%) and moderately agree (30%) ($M=3.52$, $SD=0.69$). Another survey question explored conceptualizing conflict resolution. Most participants responded that the framework used to assist them in their mid-level manager role in conflict resolution was effective (87%) strongly agree and (12%) moderately agree ($M=3.87$, $SD=0.32$). The final question relevant to mid-level manager self-efficacy addressed strategies for managing supervisors and staff. Of the total respondents, 89% strongly agree that they can identify strategies to better manage staff and supervisors and 10% responded moderately agree ($M=3.89$, $SD=0.30$). See Table 6 for survey results of self-efficacy.
Table 6

*Descriptive Statistics Results from Institute Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Mean ($M$)</th>
<th>Frequency ($f$)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I have a better understanding of the role of a mid-manager.                 | 3.42       | Strongly Agree -48% ($n=24$)  
                      Moderately Agree-46% ($n=23$)  
                      Moderately Disagree-6% ($n=3$)  
                      Strongly Disagree-0% ($n=0$) | 0.60                    |
| I was able to reflect on my personal definition of leadership and how it impacts my role as a mid-manager. | 3.52       | Strongly Agree-62% ($n=31$)  
                      Moderately Agree-30% ($n=15$)  
                      Moderately Disagree-6% ($n=3$)  
                      Strongly Disagree-2% ($n=1$) | 0.69                    |
| I learned tips for being a successful mid-manager.                         | 3.84       | Strongly Agree-84% ($n=42$)  
                      Moderately Agree-16% ($n=8$)  
                      Moderately Disagree-0% ($n=0$)  
                      Strongly Disagree-0% ($n=0$) | 0.36                    |
| I was able to reflect on how I add value to my organization                | 3.84       | Strongly Agree-86% ($n=43$)  
                      Moderately Agree-12% ($n=6$)  
                      Moderately Disagree-2% ($n=1$)  
                      Strongly Disagree-0% ($n=0$) | 0.41                    |
| I have a better understanding of strategic planning and my role in it.      | 3.54       | Strongly Agree-58% ($n=29$)  
                      Moderately Agree-38% ($n=19$)  
                      Moderately Disagree-4% ($n=2$)  
                      Strongly Disagree-0% ($n=0$) | 0.57                    |
| I was able to reflect on where my unit falls in our university’s strategic plan. | 3.58       | Strongly Agree-62% ($n=31$)  
                      Moderately Agree-34% ($n=17$)  
                      Moderately Disagree-4% ($n=2$)  
                      Strongly Disagree-0% ($n=0$) | 0.56                    |
| I better understand current trends in enrollment in higher education and how they relate to budgeting. | 3.54       | Strongly Agree-60% ($n=30$)  
                      Moderately Agree-34% ($n=17$)  
                      Moderately Disagree-6% ($n=3$)  
                      Strongly Disagree-0% ($n=0$) | 0.60                    |
| Bolman and Deals’ “Reframing Organizations” was an effective tool to help me conceptualize different approaches to an issue. | 3.87       | Strongly Agree-87% ($n=43$)  
                      Moderately Agree-12% ($n=6$)  
                      Moderately Disagree-0% ($n=0$)  
                      Strongly Disagree-0% ($n=0$) | 0.32                    |
I can identify strategies to manage supervisors’ and senior leaders in addition to those whom I supervise. | 3.89 | Strongly Agree-89% (n=44) | 0.30 |
| I developed an understanding of the important role collaboration plays in accomplishing goals. | 3.42 | Strongly Agree-46% (n=23) | 0.57 |
| I better understand the complexity of relationships/collaborations that exist and are needed in VP roles, particularly during times of transition. | 3.38 | Strongly Agree-44% (n=22) | 0.59 |

**Note:** A four-point Likert scale was used: 4=strongly agree, 3=moderately agree, 2=moderately disagree, 1=strongly disagree.

**Correlations Across Institutional Type, Carnegie Classification, Experience, Degree Earned**

The quantitative portion of this study, based on the survey items, was to explore differences in the experiences of mid-managers who attended the Institute based on four variables: institution type, research type per the Carnegie classification, years of experience, and highest degree earned (Carnegie Classifications, 2019). The first step in the statistical process was to determine if there was a difference among the four variables using a MANCOVA statistical analysis. A MANCOVA or, one-way multivariate analysis of covariance, was used to assess if there were statistically significant differences between three or more independent variables (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). See Table 7 for the MANCOVA results. The next step was to determine if there were differences among the continuous variables. Kendall’s Tau was used to determine there were no significant differences between the continuous variables.
Table 7

*Multivariate Analysis of Covariance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Pillai’s Trace</th>
<th>Wilks’ Lambda</th>
<th>Hotelling’s Trace</th>
<th>Roy’s Largest Root</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
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<td>$16.620^b$</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>.843</td>
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<td>94.982</td>
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<td>.473</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1.122$^b$</td>
<td>1.095</td>
<td>1.419$^c$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22.000</td>
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<td>66.000</td>
<td>64.000</td>
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<td>32.000</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next step in the statistical analysis was to investigate the relationship among the variables (institution type, research type, years of experience, and highest degree earned) and the survey items. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted as there are more than two independent variables to measure (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). This test concluded that there was a high correlation between the highest degree earned and learning tips for being a successful mid-level manager once the degree levels were combined. See Table 8 for between-subject effects.
To further investigate the relationship among the highest degree earned (level 1=doctoral/terminal degree, level 2=master’s degree, and level 3=master’s degree, currently pursuing a doctorate), level 2 and level 3 were combined and a Kruskal-Wallis H test and Mann-Whitney U non-parametric tests were used for analysis. Based on Kruskal-Wallis H test and the ANOVA, the level of highest degree is not significant, with an overall difference of $p=0.91$ (Kruskal) and $p=0.094$ (ANOVA). However, after combining levels 2 and 3 and comparing it to level 1, using Mann-Whitney U, the response to “I learned tips for being a successful mid-manager” is significantly different with $p=0.039$. See Table 9 for Mann-Whitney Test results.
Another significant relationship between variables were institutional type (private=1 and public=2) and “I better understand current trends in enrollment in higher education and how they relate to budgeting”. The results indicate that participants in public institutions were more likely to strongly agree that they understood current trends in higher education and how they relate to budgeting using the Mann-Whitney test, $p=0.029$. See Table 10 for Mann-Whitney test results.
Phase 2: Qualitative Analysis of Post Structured Interviews

Participant Profile. A total of 12 individuals responded to the request for structured interviews. The response rate of 20% is representative of the overall sample.

Analysis of Post Structured Interviews Results. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using a verified transcription software. In addition, field notes were developed and reviewed. To develop initial codes, clusters, and final themes, recordings were listened to repeatedly. NVIVO Software was used to provide accurate codes of each question to determine common themes amongst participants. This process was repeated for each participant and
question. Participant responses are identified as “participant 1” or ‘P1” in the quotes below.

Originally, 63 codes and 32 clusters were developed that were collapsed into 21 themes. Table 11 provides an illustration of the codes, clusters, and themes developed.

Table 11

Ad Hoc Interview Codes, Clusters, and Themes, Phase 2 Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Items</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Clusters</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a better understanding of the role of a mid-level manager after attending the Institute.</td>
<td>Big picture understanding</td>
<td>Implementer</td>
<td>Clarity in role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration with mid-managers</td>
<td>Supporter</td>
<td>Decision maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficulty</td>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Generalists</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decision makers</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manage up, down, across</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More comfortable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the Institute, I was able to reflect on my personal definition of leadership and how it impacts my role as a mid-manager.</td>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td>Visionary</td>
<td>Engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>Developer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>Best interest of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leading by example</td>
<td>team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Betterment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do what’s best for institution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the Institute, I learned tips for being a successful mid-manager.</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Anticipate needs</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Solution focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Navigate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing up</td>
<td>situations</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Own development</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make decisions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspective</td>
<td>partner</td>
<td>connector</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic Communication</td>
<td>Creator</td>
<td>Risk-taker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get things done</td>
<td>Innovator</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Team-player</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal-oriented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Accessible</td>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to understand</td>
<td>Deeper</td>
<td>Applicable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insight</td>
<td>appreciation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telling your story</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-term vision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Broad impact</td>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Meaningful</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success/Support</td>
<td>Regularly assess</td>
<td>importance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs</td>
<td>Appropriate</td>
<td>Assess institutional needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment decline</td>
<td>program investment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges in recruitment</td>
<td>Diverse student population</td>
<td>Plan for enrollment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost adjustment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited student pool</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs</td>
<td>Take initiative</td>
<td>Communicate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment decline</td>
<td>Take ownership</td>
<td>effectively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges in recruitment</td>
<td>Have difficult conversations</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost adjustment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited student pool</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Conflict isn’t negative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Objectivity</td>
<td>Have difficult conversations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unavoidable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prioritize</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Managing up</td>
<td></td>
<td>Manage around</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Solution focused</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 11 (continued). As a result of attending the Institute, I developed an understanding of the important role collaboration plays in accomplishing goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Necessary</th>
<th>Collaborate with</th>
<th>Dependent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand other departments</td>
<td>other departments</td>
<td>Vital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource heavy in higher education</td>
<td>Entire student experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a result of attending the Institute, I better understand the complexity of relationships/collaborations that exist and are needed in VP roles, particularly during times of transition.

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<tr>
<th>N=12</th>
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**Clarity in Role, Decision Maker.** The first structured interview item assessed whether participants felt they had a better understanding of their mid-level manager role as a result of in the Institute. Two main themes emerged from participant responses: clarity in role and decision maker. Broadly speaking, each participant felt that as a result of attending the Institute, they had a better understanding of their roles and were able to take away clear skills to enhance their mid-manager role. Specifically, P7, P4, P5, and P9 said:

“It just gave me a stronger understanding of my role and how I fit into the bigger picture.” P7

“I think through MMI I was able to understand where I kind of sat in the food chain of student affairs.” P4

“Your professional development and your ability to make decisions is really placed more-the onus is placed more on you as the mid-manager.” P5

“I think that going to the Mid-Managers made it very clear. I think some of what my role is but also how to live in that role. I think it just kind of made the role a little bit more
comfortable and understanding my job as a connector. Kind of communicating upwards, downwards and across. I think it gave me the perspective that I needed.” P9

Alternatively, P1 addressed the difficulty that comes with being a mid-level manager:

“I understood about the mid manager role is that, you know, it's not an easy role. You are in a position where you are literally making decisions on behalf of the department, on behalf of the team. You have to be accountable to your team and your superiors and manage expectations.” P1

While being in middle management can be difficult, there is value in attending a training Institute as it can provide clarity and insight for those managers in a holistic way by allowing attendees to feel more prepared in their mid-level manager role.

Developer of Staff, Engaged. The second item in the structured interview asked participants if they were able to reflect on their personal definition of leadership and how it impacts their mid-level manager role. Two main themes came from this item: developer of staff and engaged. P6, P3, and P1 offered the following:

“My definition of leadership is someone who has the ability to be able to guide others, but then also know when someone else needs to be the guide, at times.” P6

“I also think that part of leadership for me personally is trying to help inspire growth and others, while at the same time recognizing that, you know, to do that leaders have to grow too because everything is changing around us. So, I don't, I think a good leader can never be content or where they are.” P3

“You also have to make sure that you are staying, you know, centered around the mission or the core purpose.” P1
When considering how this definition impacts their role as a mid-manager, three participants reflected:

“I think it- it really frames on what- what my purpose is in this position.” P4

“I follow the model of servant leadership. So, I serve on behalf of supporting others, so when I make decisions, when I work with others, I always think collaboratively, and I always think beyond what I would personally want.” P5

“I'm always thinking, obviously, about how am I serving, not just our students, but our staff because I think that for me, I really focus on the development of our staff. Our graduate students and professional staff who are kind of really wanting to move up and get promoted, so what can I do to teach them all that they need to learn to then trickle down and empower our students?” P9

A valuable part of the Institute, and overall assessment goal, was for participants to expand on their leadership definition and strategy within their mid-level manager role. Participants were able to reflect on this and, as P4 mentioned above, frames the purpose in their role.

In addition, P1 stated:

“...I think it [my leadership style] allows me to be more invested in my employees.”

“I always think of servant leadership.” P7

“I follow the model of servant leadership. So, I serve on behalf of supporting others.” P5

**Communication, Anticipation/Solution Focused.** The third item on the structured interview addressed specific skills learned as a result of attending the mid-level manager Institute. Two themes emerged from this item, communication and solution focused. Many participants directly indicated that communication was a valuable skill reiterated throughout
multiple formats (presentations and small group sessions). Specifically, P6, P3, and P2 offered the following regarding communication:

“I think more about communication. I think that's a holistic way of communicating so whether it's nonverbal or verbal, how we show up in email or in person, so I think communication is always a big deal.” P6

“I guess I transparency, communication. I think just learning to be comfortable in the fact that as a supervisor you can't force them to do anything and that sometimes it's going to be a rocky relationship.” P3

“How do you communicate to your team, kind of that, that manage up and down and across the org chart scene. It was really good to hear that again at MMI. And it was also good to talk about the public communication lens.” P2

Three other individuals offered insight into skills regarding anticipation of supervisor needs and being solution focused in all aspects of the mid-level manager role and relationships:

“I think that a lot of what I took away was, again, around engagement relationship. I think as a successful mid manager you have to be able to manage relationships up, down and sideways laterally.” P11

“In order for me to be able to speak with my supervisors and what are they needing from me and that understanding is a skill that I definitely learned through MMI.” P4

“Problem solve and bring the solution to your supervisor and you know, just to listen feedback on the decision that was already made.” P1
Two participants found mission and values alignment valuable:

“I also learned about making sure that the vision, or the mission that my department has and making sure it directly connects to that of our vice president and the mission statement.” P10

“I think the most important thing I learned was how to ask for stuff. I think that was in our strategic planning session where we talked about when you're asking for something, tie back to the strategic plan, tie it back to the University's mission and that way it's not just a blind ask, but it's something that they can see and connect to the bigger picture of the Institution as a whole.” P12

**Connector, Risk-Taker.** The next item in the structured interview addressed how participants feel they added value to their institution. Two main themes became apparent from this item, being a connector and risk-taker, both critical in the mid-level manager role.

Specifically, six participants offered the following:

“I'm someone who knows how to get things done, and I'm not afraid to take on new responsibilities even when I have not done them before.” P6

“I'm also contributing in some ways just in terms of making processes better, being innovative.” P3

“I like to think that I am a team player and really carry that attitude in everything I do, whether it's within my office, whether it's within my division, whether it's on committees, always making sure that I am present and that I can contribute.” P7

“So, I would say the innovation, creative thinking, and looking at the larger picture of how we work together more collaboratively is what I am bringing to the table.” P5

“I am a relationship builder.” P8
“And so, I feel like I am just constantly being that communicator. Even though we're in a small office and we're right next to each other, we have a lot going on that I really feel like my job of being that connector is, my director likes to say, straggling the fence. Really kind of helps bring all of that together.” P9

Providing perspective was another way in which participants add value to their organization. P6 adds:

“I think that one way that I add value is that I can take on other people's perspectives. For instance, in my role, I came into a really difficult situation and so it could've been easy for me to just say, "No, this is what we're gonna do. I don't really care." But I realized in order to like, feel, the team that I had to consider where this person was coming from because in order to move people, move things along you have to... I had to understand where the person was coming from.” P6

Another participant added that differing thoughts as a value to bring to the institution:

“But I think diversity in thought is one of the most, I guess, one of my strongest things that I bring the Institution.” P12

Due to middle managers being the largest administrative group in the higher education organizational chart, it is critical that they be able to express and connect how they add value to their institution. Senior leaders and administrators want mid-level managers who can bring tangible skillsets to move the institution forward.

**Perspective, Applicable.** The next item in the structured interview specifically addressed participants’ understanding of strategic planning and their role in the process. Participants were clear in that the Institute provided them with the knowledge of a broader perspective and
understanding of strategic planning and made it applicable to their role as mid-managers. Six participant examples include:

“Well, I think what helped me with the Institute is that they just made is so, like accessible. I mean, I think that's the thing. I think when we hear things like strategic planning or assessment or some of these buzz words, sometimes I think it can be a little daunting and they just really helped to break it down into a very accessible way. It's like, oh, I can do this.” P6

“So, through the Institute I was able to see, you know, why- why it's important. I understood why it was the importance of it, but really understanding, you know, how this is gonna shape not only my job, the overall mission of my office, but the university.” P4

“Oh my gosh, it helped so much! I think I only knew in theory about strategic planning, but when I went to the Institute and we started doing the workshops and practicing and having discussions about it, it made it so much more clear to me to be able to have a better understanding of looking at all the different components that are important for setting our goals.” P5

“I just think that it's more about understanding like the big picture and how everything's aligned. I knew that about it, I learned that a while ago, but I think that the Institute really helped me connect that in a way that I hadn't before.” P10

“In terms of better understanding the process as a result of the Institute, I think probably the thing that stands out most for me is recognizing that it really can't happen in a vacuum. I do have a deep appreciation and a deeper appreciation for how you can't establish any of those priorities in a vacuum from any of the other areas within the institution.” P8
“I think what I took from that was just the importance of one, knowing the strategic plan that the University has, and where I fit in that, and where my department fits in that. And if I don't see myself, figuring out how to get there.” P12

While one participant was familiar with strategic planning prior to the Institute, she felt that the Institute provided more insight than she previously had:

“I wasn't completely unfamiliar with strategic planning as our university had already gone through a phase of strategic planning and we had a plan and now we're coming up on that next phase. So, it gave me some insight, but it, I wasn't starting from scratch.” P7

Another participant felt that strategic planning is necessary story telling for the department or university:

“It [strategic planning] is a necessary part of growing your department and understanding who you are and telling a story. I got an understanding that strategic planning is not just vision setting. It's really about the strategy behind the plan, and how you're gonna get there, and being intentional about dedicating resources. so, our conversation at MMI really helped me to be more, more strategic and intentional about the strategy behind our work, and really think about, in the larger picture, how strategic planning can actually be a tool and not a burden.” P2

**Clarity, Understand Importance.** Another area addressed in the structured interview was participants’ understanding of where their unit falls in their university strategic plan. As a result of attending the Institute, two themes became apparent: clarity and understanding the importance of knowing where their unit fits in the strategic plan:

“We fit within the plan, as in looking at the overall student experience, whether that be through means of community service, leadership development, or overall involvement
within the institution. And because of the Institute, understand why that was so important.” P4

“Well yeah, they were definitely opening the door for us to take a look at that more. But I think it, the experience of know- hearing of it first and then afterwards experiencing it clicked for me.” P5

“And so, to be honest, the Institute actually helped me see the uncertainty, but it also helps me see how I could potentially insert our programs into the conversation.” P12

“I think how it's clear is just, from the Institute, is just making, making sure that I'm always aware of what the plan and goals are for our university.” P9

“I think a lot of what we do focuses on the teaching and the learning of our students. And so, I think, through MMI, I was just able to see that we are sort of this thread throughout our college. Then we also interact with different departments, internal and external, and so it just made me really realize that we are really the thread that sort of binds a lot of what's happening in our college and how that connects also to other units and colleges in our institution.” P6

Another participant was able to understand the importance of collaboration with faculty in understanding where their unit fits in the university plan:

“Because we have an understanding of student development theory, because we know generational theory, we can help support that mission even better now because we know how important it is for faculty to be able to change and maneuver through classroom management so that they can be better teachers for the students.” P5

One participant found language used in the strategic plan to be most helpful:
“Drawing from things that I learned at the Institute, you have to be mindful of the language that you include in that plan. You know, we had some really deep conversations in some of these meetings about, "All right, what do we mean by that?" And I think we're all guilty sometimes of, you know, all right, well, how do you define student success?" P8

Participants were able to clearly articulate the importance of strategic planning, both from the university perspective and division and departmental level. Being more knowledgeable of the strategic planning process and the significance of departmental fit, enhances mid-level manager self-efficacy. These skills better assist mid-level managers in being effective in their roles, but also, understanding the institution’s priorities.

**Assess Institutional Needs/Plan for Enrollment.** The next item in the structured interview addressed participants’ understanding of trends in enrollment and how they relate to the budget process. A critical and necessary skill for mid-managers. Six participants mentioned the enrollment decline in higher education as a main takeaway. Four examples are provided below:

“Some of the things that we discussed this even declining enrollments over time and how does that impact the work that we do? How can we be more focused on the retention of our students?” P7

“So, I remember basically just say the trends that there's gonna be less students, more competition for the students. A lot of the students, you know, who might be like non-traditional students, um, or just coming from backgrounds who previously didn't always go to higher ed. The diversity will continue to increase.” P3
“There may come a point where we are not held in a very precarious situation with regards to, you know, how students are able to apply for education. Where you know, will put us in a spot where we, we face low enrollment, which we're now seeing nationwide.” P1

“It kinda opened my eyes on the fact that we are about hit a downturn in the amount of students that are available to us. That was something that I was not aware of up until I came to MMI.” P4

Regarding how enrollment trends impact budgeting, participants indicated:

“So, we need to find new ways to, you know, to entice students to want to take on that type of investment.” P1

“I think that having that realization and seeing, yes, it's competitive already, but we haven't seen anything yet. I mean, you know, five, ten years down the road, the pool of students we're pulling from is gonna be a drastically smaller level, and what that looks like for our university, what we need to do in order to compete, but also what do we need to change in order to stay relevant, to the world of higher education.” P4

“And it just re-emphasized for me that it really takes a university to graduate a student, not just one department and you pass them off. And so, for us it's essential to be involved at every single stage.” P2

These statements reiterate the importance of mid-level managers being knowledgeable of enrollment trends and budgeting as a core function of their role. Mid-level managers are often the ones implementing programs and initiatives to support nationwide trends and university strategy.
Communicate Effectively, Understanding. The following item on the structured interview assessed participant ability to conceptualize issues and conflict using Bolman and Deal’s “Reframing Organizations” model. Five participants identified communication as an effective tool in managing conflict:

“I think it was just the need for transparency, the need for open communication. I think when there are complex issues trying to approach it from that, one's trying to have to understand where the other person was coming from. I think also knowing that sometimes you're just not going to agree or have different opinions, but can you still accomplish what you need to accomplish?” P3

“I am all about letting individuals have their time, you know. And I'm all about communication.” P4

“I think just generally it would be communication. So, I think the initial step with that is communication and being able to understand how to have diplomatic solution-oriented discussions.” P11

“It is much more helpful to make sure that people know that they are being heard, and to make sure that their opinions are included in our processes. So, meeting them where they are, and opening up opportunities to go to them, instead of waiting for them to come to us is really important in working with those conflicts.” P5

“…listen more than you speak. And so, you know, when you are dealing with conflict and you're dealing, especially conflict between two parties that you have to mediate. Also, if you have any time, think about the situation and think objectively.” P1

Specifically, P12 learned how to approach and navigate difficult conversations, a necessary skill in the mid-level manager role:
“I really understood how to navigate those conversations, those critical conversations, in a way that the relationship was not damaged, but the information was received and understood. I think that to navigate conflict, you have to be willing to have those tough conversations and be willing to identify a plan to improve, and open and honest about the consequences of not improving.” P12

One participant was able to conclude that, as the mid-manager, certain situations will require you to make difficult decisions:

“Everyone's not going to always be happy with the decision that, that comes out, right? And, as a mid-manager, you're going to be in situations where, you know, you make decisions all the time and people will like the decisions or they're not going to be happy with the outcome of, you know, certain situations.” P1

Another participant was able to understand the value of perspective in conflict:

“One I think by being open minded and not just thinking about things from my perspective and looking at it from my only lens. But also, not dealing with conflict as a negative thing all the time.” P10

Navigating conflict is an important skill for management, specifically mid-level managers. Mid-level managers have the unique task of navigating situations with those who report to them and navigating difficult situations of those above them, sometimes simultaneously. Being able to maneuver through precarious situations at all levels is of upmost importance for mid-level managers.

Prioritize, Manage Around. The next item on the structured interview addressed participants’ ability to manage supervisor’s, senior leaders, and staff whom they supervise.
Accordingly, the two themes that materialized were understanding priorities and managing around to support all entities. Distinct examples from five participants are below:

“I basically make sure they're [supervisors] aware of what you're doing and so I think I actually did, probably not, I can't remember exactly but I feel like I redid my one-on-one meeting agenda based off of MMI so not only one of our talking points for this meeting but then also what are some things in progress that we need to work on or I'm working on and who's accountable for that. Also, being able to like do that managing up and just being more aware of what that person needs.” P6

“Making sure that you're understanding what is going on, but also taking, taking the lead sometimes. And it's not to take uninformed lead. Also, seeing yourself as part of that bigger picture and be intentional in your work, but also be present even when maybe not asked…” P7

“Managing up piece, I do that for them. Making sure that you're communicating what's important, what needs to be communicated.” P3

“Just managing up and being managed up.” P1

“…that was the managing up piece that I had mentioned a little bit earlier. That was probably my favorite part of the Institute, thinking about how we anticipate the goals and the interests of supervisors.” P5

“Being able to do that [managing up] and just being more aware of what that person needs.” P6

“Also, with the same thing, let your direct supervisees manage up with you as well sometimes. Don't be afraid to allow, you know, your people who, you know support you on a daily basis, do the same for you.” P1
Another participant identified intentionality in taking the lead in situations as an important skill for managing supervisors:

“Making sure that you're understanding what is going on, but also taking the lead sometimes. And it's not to take uninformed lead. But to see yourself as part of that bigger picture and be intentional in your work, but also be present even when maybe not asked… but owning it. How to own something, how to own something within your office.” P7

Managing up and escalating appropriately are necessary skills. As a mid-level manager, it becomes an even more integral skill as they are often negotiating between two entities (those who report to them and senior leaders). Effective communication is the impetus for managing up and being managed.

**Dependent, Vital.** The following item on the structured interview addressed the importance of collaboration in accomplishing goals. Regarding collaboration, five participants offered the following insights:

“My role is dependent of collaboration.” P6

“In my current role, I couldn't do anything without collaboration.” P7

“It is essential and needed and you can't move the work of diversity and inclusion just trying to do it yourself.” P10

“I can't implement the work that I do without taking into consideration how that impacts the other individuals in my- in my group and, and by that, I mean my larger- my larger group.” P8

“Collaboration is everything. Particularly when we're talking about, when we're in a time where resources, at least at my institution, right now are quite scarce and sometimes they
get a little finite, and one of the things we talked about at MMI is seeking out new opportunities for collaboration.” P2

“So, in my role everything that we do is collaborative. For myself what I would say… I work with every single area on our college.” P11

**Foundation, Make Connections.** The final structured interview item assessed participants’ understanding of collaboration from the vice president’s lens and student affairs in general. P7, P3, P8, and P9 offer specific thoughts on collaboration from a senior leadership angle:

“When it comes to the vice president level, across the university is really important, because they tend to be in a position where it's the student affairs side also interconnects with the academic side. So, making sure that those relationships are strong… collaborations or needs that will require both the academic affairs as well as the student affairs side.” P7

“And you can get more movement, more attraction if you have those personal relationships. So, I would imagine as a VP that you wouldn't want to say that people are very open to collaboration and are having good working in on relationships because if they're not, again, that creates a lot of barriers.” P3

“From a vice president level, I think that it’s really demonstrating that not only in terms of my work with the other vice presidents, the individuals at that- at that level, but then also it's a- it's a situation of modeling that for the folks who report to me.” P8

“I think that on the vice president's level, I see that as not really looking at where we currently are… having that similar mindset, but for looking years ahead. Like, I
understand and see where this department is going to be in a few years, or that departments going to be, and so doing some of that alignment.” P9

Collaboration, at both the departmental level and from the vice president lens, is essential and far reaching within the university setting. Higher education systems are one of the most complex institutions and rarely do initiatives happen without effective and intentional collaborative efforts. This is a skill that mid-level managers must understand and utilize in order to be competent in their role.

**Phase 3: Quantitative Analysis of Post Ad Hoc Survey**

A post ad-hoc survey was conducted with the same participants who had participated in the one-on-one structured interviews. The purpose of the post ad hoc survey was to further assess the direct impact the Institute had on participants’ self-efficacy. Ad hoc research is conducted for a specific point in time and is not continuous (Association for Qualitative Research, n.d.). In this case, the researcher is utilizing the post ad hoc survey to investigate the Institute’s effect on self-efficacy in five main areas (free speech, cultural competency, budgeting and strategic planning, collaboration and partnership, and leading managing, and followership/navigating the political landscape). See Table 12 and Appendix D for ad hoc survey questions.

**Participant Profile**

There was a 20% response rate (n=12) for the ad hoc survey. Of the respondents, majority were female (92%), with master’s degrees (67%). Additionally, all were from public institutions (100%) and majority were directors (50%). See Table 13 for post ad hoc survey institution type, Table 14 for post ad hoc survey participant highest degree earned, Table 15 for
participant gender, and Table 16 for research type, and Table 17 for participant positions. One participant works for a professional association and is coded as “other” in the table.

Table 12

Ad Hoc Survey Participant Institution Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=12

Table 13

Ad Hoc Survey Participant Highest Degree Earned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Degree Earned</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHD</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuing PHD</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
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</table>

N=12

Table 14

Ad Hoc Survey Participant Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>11</td>
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N=12
Table 15

**Ad Hoc Survey Participant Research Type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Type</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral University/R1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral University/R2</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s College/University</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College/Two Year</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8%</td>
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N=12

Table 16

**Ad Hoc Survey Participant Positions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Vice Provost</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Vice President</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Director</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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N=12

**Analysis of Post Ad Hoc Survey Results**

**Mid-level manager Self-Efficacy.** Four questions examined mid-level manager self-efficacy as a result of attending the Institute. The first question explored participants having a better understanding of the mid-level manager role as a result of the Institute. Majority of participants responded strongly agree (91%) ($M=4.92$, $SD=0.28$). The next question related to self-efficacy addressed participants’ ability to reflect on their personal definition of leadership as a result of attending the Institute. Although 17% responded moderately agree and 9% responded neutral, the majority of participants responded with strongly agree (75%) ($M=4.67$, $SD=0.62$). Another survey question explored conceptualizing conflict resolution as a result of attending the
Institute. While 58% selected moderately agree, 25% selected strongly agree and 17% selected neutral ($M=4.08, SD=0.64$). The final question relevant to mid-level manager self-efficacy addressed strategies for managing supervisors and staff as a result of attending the Institute. Majority of participants responded with strongly agree (83%) while 17% responded with moderately agree ($M=4.83, SD=0.37$).

**Skills, Relationships, and Dispositions.** Seven questions explored participants’ skills, relationships, and dispositions gained at the Institute to make meaningful contributions to the field of student affairs. The first question addressed if participants felt they learned specific tips for being a successful mid-manager as a result of attending the Institute. Most participants responded strongly agree (83%) or moderately agree (17%) ($M=4.83, SD=0.37$). The second question addressed participant’s ability to reflect on how they add value to their organization as a result of attending the Institute. Majority of participants strongly agreed (42%) or moderately agreed (58%) ($M=4.42, SD=0.49$). The third question addressed if participants have a better understanding of strategic planning and their role in it as a result of the Institute. While 17% responded neutral, 33% responded strongly agree and 50% responded moderately agree ($M=4.17, SD=0.69$). The fourth question also addressed the understanding of strategic planning from a departmental level as a result of the Institute. Majority of participants responded strongly agree (42%) and moderately agree (42%), while 17% responded neutral ($M=4.25, SD=0.72$). The fifth question investigated participants understanding of enrollment trends and budgeting as a result of the Institute. While 1% of participants responded neutral, 50% responded strongly agree and 42% responded moderately agree ($M=4.42, SD=0.64$). The sixth question addressed participants understanding of collaboration as a result of participation in the Institute. All participants responded either strongly agree (67%) or moderately agree (33%) ($M=4.67$,
The final question addressed an understanding of collaboration from a vice president’s lens as a result of Institute participation. While 9% responded neutral, the remainder responded strongly agree (83%) or moderately agree (9%) \((M=4.75, SD=0.60)\). See Table 17 for post ad hoc survey results.

Table 17

**Descriptive Statistics Results from Post Ad Hoc Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Mean ((M))</th>
<th>Frequency ((f))</th>
<th>Standard Deviation ((SD))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a better understanding of the role of a mid-level manager after attending the Institute.</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>Strongly Agree-91% ((n=11)) Moderately Agree-9% ((n=1)) Moderately Disagree-0% ((n=0)) Strongly Disagree-0% ((n=0)) Neutral-0% ((n=0))</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the Institute, I was able to reflect on my personal definition of leadership and how it impacts my role as a mid-manager.</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>Strongly Agree-75% ((n=9)) Moderately Agree-17% ((n=2)) Moderately Disagree-0% ((n=0)) Strongly Disagree-0% ((n=0)) Neutral-9% ((n=1))</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the Institute, I learned tips for being a successful mid-manager.</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>Strongly Agree-83% ((n=10)) Moderately Agree-17% ((n=2)) Moderately Disagree-0% ((n=0)) Strongly Disagree-0% ((n=0)) Neutral-0% ((n=0))</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Moderate Agree</th>
<th>Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was able to reflect on how I add value to my organization after attending the Institute.</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>42% (n=5)</td>
<td>58% (n=7)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a better understanding of strategic planning and my role in it as a result of attending the Institute.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>33% (n=4)</td>
<td>50% (n=6)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>17% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the Institute, I was able to reflect on where my unit falls in our university’s strategic plan.</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>42% (n=5)</td>
<td>42% (n=5)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>17% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I better understand current trends in enrollment in higher education and how they relate to budgeting as a result of attending the Institute.</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>50% (n=6)</td>
<td>42% (n=5)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>9% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the Institute, Bolman and Deals’ “Reframing Organizations” was an effective tool to help me conceptualize different approaches to an issue.</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>25% (n=3)</td>
<td>58% (n=7)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>17% (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Moderate Agree</th>
<th>Moderate Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>t-test Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can identify strategies to manage supervisors’ and senior leaders in</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>83% (n=10)</td>
<td>17% (n=2)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>addition to those whom I supervise because I attended the Institute.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of attending the Institute, I developed an understanding of</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>67% (n=8)</td>
<td>33% (n=4)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the important role collaboration plays in accomplishing goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of attending the Institute, I better understand the complexity</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>83% (n=10)</td>
<td>9% (n=1)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>9% (n=1)</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of relationships/collaborations that exist and are needed in VP roles,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>particularly during times of transition.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A five-point Likert scale was used: 5=strongly agree, 4=moderately agree, 3=neutral, 2=moderately disagree, 1=strongly disagree.

### Differences in Means Between Institute Post Survey and Post Ad Hoc Survey

To assess if there was an increase in self-efficacy during the period immediately after the Institute when the Institute conducted a post institute survey and when the researcher conducted Phase 3, a post ad hoc survey, the differences in means was calculated using a two-sample t-test with equal or unequal variance. The Hartley test was conducted first to assess normality of
distribution of equal variance. This process was repeated for each question to assess the differences in means of each question.

The results revealed an increase in six items on the survey. Specifically, there was significant improvement in understanding of the mid-level manager role with p-value 0.004, leadership and its impact on the mid-level manager role with p-value 0.048, tips for being a successful manager with p-value 0.009, strategies to manage supervisors and staff with p-value 0.008, collaboration and accomplishing goals with p-value 0.015, and collaboration from a vice president’s lens with p-value 0.0017. See Table 18 for differences in means between Institute’s post survey and post ad hoc survey results.

Table 18

*Differences in Means 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table6A</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>3.420</td>
<td>.600</td>
<td>.300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table12A</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>4.920</td>
<td>.280</td>
<td>.140</td>
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**Independent Samples Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equal variances assumed</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-1.500</td>
<td>.331</td>
<td>-4.531</td>
<td>6.000</td>
<td>.004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-1.500</td>
<td>.331</td>
<td>-4.531</td>
<td>4.245</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Harley test for equal variance: F = 4.592, Sig. = 0.0845
Table 18 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table6B</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.520</td>
<td>.690</td>
<td>.345</td>
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<tr>
<td>Table12B</td>
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<td>4.670</td>
<td>.620</td>
<td>.310</td>
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**Independent Samples Test**

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>-1.150</td>
<td>.464</td>
<td>-2.479</td>
<td>6.000</td>
<td>.048</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-1.150</td>
<td>.464</td>
<td>-2.479</td>
<td>5.933</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hartley test for equal variance: F = 1.239, Sig. = 0.4204

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table6C</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.840</td>
<td>.360</td>
<td>.180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table12C</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.830</td>
<td>.370</td>
<td>.185</td>
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</table>

**Independent Samples Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>- .990</td>
<td>.258</td>
<td>-3.835</td>
<td>6.000</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>- .990</td>
<td>.258</td>
<td>-3.835</td>
<td>5.996</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hartley test for equal variance: F = 1.056, Sig. = 0.4795

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table6l</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.890</td>
<td>.300</td>
<td>.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table12l</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.830</td>
<td>.370</td>
<td>.185</td>
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</table>

**Independent Samples Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>- .940</td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>-3.947</td>
<td>6.000</td>
<td>.006</td>
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<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>- .940</td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>-3.947</td>
<td>5.754</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hartley test for equal variance: F = 1.521, Sig. = 0.3472
Table 18 (continued)

Conversely, there was no evidence of a significant change in five items on the survey. Understanding in the following areas remained the same: adding value to the organization, strategic planning, strategic planning and departmental fit, trends in enrollment and budgeting, and conflict resolution. See Table 19 for no differences between the Institutes post survey and the post ad hoc survey results.
Table 19

Differences in Means 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 6D</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>3.840</td>
<td>.410</td>
<td>.205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 12D</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>4.420</td>
<td>.490</td>
<td>.245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Independent Samples Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
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Hartley test for equal variance: F = 1.428, Sig. = 0.3691

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### Word Cloud

At the conclusion of the post-Institute survey, participants were asked to describe the Mid-level manager Institute in one word. Results were generated and shared using Microsoft word cloud. Consistent with the comprehensive outcomes of this mixed methods study, participants found the experience to be dynamic and tangible in helping them to develop a greater sense of their self-efficacy as mid-managers. See figure 8 for word cloud results.
Final Model of Mid-level Manager Self-Efficacy

The themes that originated from the three-part mixed method study were used to create the final model of mid-level manager self-efficacy. Specifically, the themes connected to the mediating variables of, skills, relationships, and dispositions in the original model are integrated into the final model. An additional mediating variable was created entitled, educational level as a result of the quantitative analysis. The themes developed, free speech, cultural competency, strategic planning/budgeting, collaboration/campus partnership, and leading/managing/followership were built upon phase one to develop specific skills, relationships, and dispositions to enhance mid-level student affairs managers’ self-efficacy as a result of their participating in Institute program. See Figure 9.
Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of a short-term intervention on mid-level student affairs managers’ self-efficacy. Specifically, which skills, relationships, and dispositions lead to participants’ belief in their ability to make meaningful contributions in their role as mid-level student service manager at their respective institutions. To further investigate the two research hypotheses, a three-part mixed methods study was conducted. In the first, quantitative phase, secondary data analyses were conducted on data obtained from the Institute’s post Institute survey. The second, qualitative phase, involved conducting follow-up structured interviews with a subsample of those who attended the Institute. The third phase, also quantitative, included conducting a post ad hoc survey.

From the first quantitative phase, two correlations were found. The first was between “highest degree earned” and the survey item, “I learned tips for being a successful mid-manager.”
Using the Mann-Whitney test there was a significant difference with $p=0.039$. The second correlation was between institutional type of participants and “I better understand current trends in enrollment in higher education and how they relate to budgeting.” Replicating the Mann-Whitney test there was a significant difference with $p=0.029$.

During the qualitative second, based on post Institute structured interviews conducted by the researcher assessed specific participant experiences regarding skills, relationships, and dispositions learned at the Institute. The phase yielded 22 themes in which 12 were used in development of the final model. Based on the findings, participants learned specialized skills to contribute to the field of student affairs.

From the quantitative phase, in which the researcher conducted a post ad hoc survey, provided insight on participant understanding of the Institute objectives one-year post attendance. The results indicate that in terms of the mid-level manager role, participants have an increased understanding one-year after attending the Institute. Additionally, participants have an increased understanding of strategies for managing supervisors and staff, and better appreciate the importance of collaboration in the mid-level manager role.

In the following chapter, Chapter V, a summary, conclusions, and recommendations from this study are provided.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated the effectiveness of a short-term intervention on mid-level manager self-efficacy in the field of student affairs. It was hypothesized that if participants have a better understanding of the skills, relationships, and dispositions that will help them to provide meaningful contributions to the field of student affairs, it will impact their sense of self-efficacy as mid-level student affairs managers. This chapter provides a summary of the study findings and conclusions as well as recommendations for future research.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine whether self-efficacy increased in mid-level student affairs managers as a result of attending a short-term training intervention. The study utilized a mixed methods approach and was guided by two research hypotheses:

$H_1$: Mid-level managers enrolled in the short-term intervention will develop a better understanding of the skills, relationships, and dispositions required to provide meaningful contributions to their role as a student affairs administrator.

$H_2$: The use of a short-term intervention will have a positive effect on mid-level managers’ self-efficacy as it relates to their role as a mid-level manager in student affairs.

There were several limitations to this study. The participants of the study included only mid-level student affairs managers who attended one Institute program; thus, this research constitutes a case study. Regarding phase 1, the researcher retrieved the post-survey results from the Institute director, and therefore, did not have control over the data collection process. Because this study utilized a sample of convenience, the respondents for the follow up structured
interviews and ad-hoc survey included only those who self-elected to participate; they represented 20% of the original attendee population. In addition, the study took place more than a year after the completion of the Institute and other factors may have influenced their responses due to the gap in time. Also, the respondents were mostly female versus male (92% versus 8%). Finally, this study lacked randomized treatment and control groups; the focus was on all individuals who attended the Institute program.

**Conclusions**

This section provides an overview of the findings and the relationship of the findings to the research hypotheses and literature.

**H1: Mid-level managers enrolled in the short-term intervention will develop a better understanding of the skills, relationships, and dispositions required to provide meaningful contributions to their role as a student affairs administrator.**

**Skills**

**Prioritize, Manage Around, Decision Maker**

The results from this study suggest that mid-level managers who attended the Institute had an increased awareness of the mid-level manager role, were able to reflect on his or her personal definition of leadership and how it impacts their role as a mid-level manager, and had an increased understanding of specific tips for becoming a successful mid-level manager. Findings from this study support previous research that leadership development enhances the individual professionally and the institution (Fletcher et al., 2018).

The findings from this study indicate that participants acquired three main skillsets (prioritize, manage around, and decision maker) that allowed them to be more effective in their role as mid-level manager in student affairs. In addition, participants expressed the value of
learning more about adjusting their leadership approach to increase their efficacy in terms of relating to the employees whom they supervise. Participants in this study referenced the need to be more flexible in their role, allowing them to prioritize tasks and efficiently manage up and down the chain of command. Being in the role of a mid-level manager sometimes means negotiating competing interests and having to “own” decisions and move forward, which is not an easy feat. Overall, the Institute provided an intentional opportunity for participants to learn, reflect, grow, and implement strategies to be more successful in their roles, but also in the broader context of student affairs.

**Relationships**

**Connector, Foundation, Understanding.** Findings from this study indicate that mid-level managers who attended the Institute had better knowledge of the relationships required to increase their efficacy in their mid-level manager role. Being a collaborator was a significant relationship skill identified as a takeaway from the Institute. Specifically, collaboration with the goal of building sustainable relationships, was reflected as the foundation of student affairs work.

Mid-level managers require elaborate skills to be proficient in their roles. Per previous studies, mid-level managers have the greatest potential to enact change on college campuses (Ackerman, 2007). However, this change cannot happen in a siloed manner. Considering colleges and universities are one of the most complex organizations, it requires diplomatic and deliberate relationships to be successful in any role (Adams-Dunford, et al., 2019; Ellis & Moon, 1991). This study found that mid-level managers in student services understand the importance of connecting and collaborating with stakeholders within and outside of their departments to advance the work at their respective institutions. Specifically, participants recognized the value of meaningful collaborations and described methods in which to enhance their relationships and
networks on their campuses. This is particularly important for mid-level managers as that role can be ambiguous and require strategic relational collaboration (Adams-Dunford, et al., 2019).

**Dispositions**

**Engaged, Developer of Staff, Risk-Taker.** This study found specific dispositions (engaged, developer of staff, and risk taker) correlated with mid-level manager self-efficacy. Considering mid-level managers are situated in the middle of the organizational structure, they require unique skillsets and three themes (engaged, developer of staff, and risk taker) emerged as prominent dispositions for mid-level managers to be successful in his or her role. Mid-managers are responsible for executing programs, strategies, and ideas to move universities forward.

A major function within the mid-level manager role is to develop staff so that they can be prepared to step into the mid-level manager roles. This contributes to the succession planning necessary for the organization to continue to function. Furthermore, mid-level managers must also be creators of knowledge and innovations to propose new ideas, processes, and solutions to senior leaders (Mather et al., 2009). In order to effectively accomplish this, it means taking appropriate risks. Participants were able to articulate the value in developing staff, being engaged, and taking risks.

Generally, participants in this study were able to reflect on definitive characteristics that enhanced their belief in their ability to be effective in their role as mid-level student affairs managers. Being innovative and at the forefront of trends that advance the work of student affairs is beneficial. Without trailblazers who are willing to pioneer new ideas, universities will not meet the needs of the ever-evolving student.
Educational Level

**Terminal Degree.** The final theme, relevant to the first hypothesis, which emerged from the study was the impact of educational level on participants' ability to make meaningful contributions to the field of student affairs. There is a correlation between having a terminal degree and learning tips for being a successful mid-level manager ($p=0.039$). Three of the participants have terminal degrees or are in the process of receiving their terminal degree. This finding suggests that as individuals further their education and move up in the organizational structure, there is importance in progressing professionally which, in turn, contributes to their effectiveness as mid-level student affairs managers.

This study finding is consistent with the literature of the mid-level manager profile. As compared to previous decades, more mid-level managers possess graduate degrees (master’s and doctoral) than in previous years (Keim and Sermersheim, 2005). This finding also suggests that terminal degrees are more commonplace for those in higher education management. This may also be reflective of hiring practices for mid-level managers. Institutions are looking for individuals who possess the tangible skills to be effective in their mid-level manager role, but also those that who have the educational expertise to demonstrate successful. Often times, these two in combination can successfully assist a mid-level manager in moving up within the organization into a senior-level position.
H$_2$: The use of a short-term intervention will have a positive effect on mid-level managers’ self-efficacy as it relates to their role as a mid-level manager in student affairs.

Self-Efficacy

Clarity in Role, Solution Focused, Communication. The findings from this study suggests that participants perceived an increase in their self-efficacy as mid-level managers as a result of participating in the Institute’s development program. Participants experienced enhanced clarity in their role, better understanding of the positive impact of communication, and the need to be more solution focused. Participants explicitly reported they learned strategies to be a more effective leaders and managers; therefore, improving their self-efficacy. Additionally, self-efficacy in specific areas related to the mid-level manager’s role increased over time as a result of the Institute. This increase was demonstrated by the post assessment survey that the Institute conducted. An increase in self-efficacy was also demonstrated in Phase 2 and 3 when a subsample of participants participated in a post structure interview and post ad hoc survey conducted by the researcher. These results reflect the importance of professional development, such as the intervention that was conducted by the Institute, on the long-term effects on self-efficacy and sustainably. Upon returning from the Institute’s program, participants have had opportunities to implement and refine what was learned at the Institute, and in the process increase their sense of self-efficacy and success. The Institute provided the opportunity for participants to reflect on their areas of development and growth necessary in a safe, professional space. Furthermore, due to the Institute’s structure, participants were able to think critically about how they can utilize the training obtained, build relationships, and develop skills to be effective in their respective roles, thusly, contributing to the success of their campuses.
Per the literature, self-efficacy impacts one’s belief in reaching his or her goals and increases the locus of control that one has in order to attain one’s goal (Carter, et al., 2018). More specifically, leader cognition is the variable reflective of individual’s self-efficacy in relation to the leadership task (McCormick, 2001). Based on the findings from this study, leader cognition was increased in relation to skills, relationships, and dispositions. Participants reported that they more confident in their ability to lead (task).

**Recommendations**

**University Trainings**

All participants sought the Institute as an avenue to continually develop in their roles as mid-level managers in student affairs. Some participants paid their own expenses to be able to attend. This sheds light on the need for universities to provide internal development of mid-level managers. Ultimately, universities gain by investing in mid-level managers. Examples of competencies gained from professional development include personnel and fiscal management, conflict analysis and resolution, networking, and perspectives; all deemed important competencies of mid-level managers (Scott, 2000; Adams-Dunford et al., 2019). This research, along with the results of this study, demonstrates the need for universities to own and invest in the development of their mid-level managers. While many universities offer initial onboarding training for new hires, it is recommended that human resources departments develop professional training opportunities specific to mid-level managers regarding their role at the institution. If the university developed and implemented such professional development training, the content would need to be relevant to the employee and institution, cost-effective, and readily available for mid-level managers who seek it.
It can be difficult to get approval to attend an off-site Institute focused on professional development due to leave, budgetary constraints, or other restrictions. Providing an internal training, such as the Institute’s professional development program, on campus would alleviate pressures that come with attending external training opportunities.

**Professional Action Plans**

It is necessary for individuals in mid-level management roles to seek out opportunities to develop professionally (Adams-Dunford, et.al, 2019). Professional action plans allow participants to capture knowledge required and outline a professional development plan on how to achieve personal professional career goals. Being in an immersive training for a week can be overwhelmingly positive, especially Institute’s professional development program. However, because of the rich conversations, presentations, observations, and small group discussions, it can be difficult to remember everything learned and thoughts or ideas on implementation. This study took place a year post-Institute experience and while many participants were able to readily draw upon knowledge gained at the Institute, some individuals had difficulty remembering content from specific sessions. Some of the participants kept their notes from the Institute in their office to refer to them regularly, depending on the situation. Having participants complete a professional development plan, during the Institute, helped them to ensure that their expertise and knowledge was not lost, and it but also encouraged participants to create a realistic and concrete professional development action plan. The action plan should include immediate clear goals and objectives that align with the current goals of their place of employment which can be acted on once returning to their respective campuses. Additionally, professional development action plans should contain mid- and long-term professional goals that are specific to the individual. The plan will help participants to remain professionally motivated.
**Budget Webinars**

Findings from the quantitative phase of the study found that mid-level student affairs managers at public institutions were more knowledgeable of current enrollment trends as they relate to budgeting in higher education ($p=0.029$). Budgetary oversight and knowledge are a significant skillset for mid-level managers. Mid-level managers must track how funds are spent and they must relate to short and long-term institutional goals (Barr & McClellan, 2011). To better gain knowledge on the importance of budgetary matters, it is recommended that mid-level managers at private institutions take advantage of webinars related to budgeting in higher education. While these webinars can be beneficial for mid-level managers in both public and private sectors, based on this study, mid-level managers at public institutions were more keenly aware of budgetary regulation due to state funding practices and policies that were mid-level managers from private institutions. It is important that managers at private institutions receive training to be equally effective in their role, and which could also prove helpful if they were to seek future employment at a public institution.

**Strategic Mentorship**

The participants of this study appreciated that the Institute was focused on mid-level managers and sought out the experience to improve performance in their roles and professional development and growth in the student affairs profession. The literature reflects that mid-level managers are often overlooked in the training process, yet this group is the largest administrative group on college campuses (Adams-Dunford et al., 2019). Many participants found it valuable to be able to network with senior leaders in the field and voiced that they would like to continue the relationships that they made with senior level administrators at the Institute. It is recommended that mid-level managers be paired with senior leaders from their own home institution so that
they can develop a greater sense of self-efficacy in their current roles, better serve their institutions, and position themselves as one-day senior managers, there by contributing the institutions’ succession planning goals and institutional sustainability goals.

Directions for Future Research

While this study provided insight into the professional development needs and outcomes related to a short-term intervention of mid-level managers in the field of student affairs, there are additional research areas that will contribute to the scholarship in this area. This study was limited in that it only investigated one Institute in one area of higher education and only explored a short-term intervention. Further research in the area of professional development of mid-level student services managers will mitigate these limitations.

In order to expound on the data collected in this study, one recommendation for future research is to conduct a longitudinal study that looks at participant’s career growth related to self-efficacy over an extended period. The current study does not provide insight into long-term outcomes of a short-term intervention. Another way to expound upon the study is to enroll mid-level managers in a long-term training opportunity to assess the effectiveness on mid-level manager self-efficacy. This will allow researchers to ascertain the efficiency of ongoing training.

Another opportunity for expansion is to complete a comparative study of other training Institutes for mid-level managers. The inclusion of a control group will strengthen a comparative study and allow extrapolation of results to the entire field of student affairs, which a case study cannot. Nonetheless, a case study provides in-depth insights on a single event which contributes to the literature on the field of student affairs.

Other opportunities for expansion include conducting professional training on other areas in regard to the development of mid-level managers in higher education. Specific areas of
potential scholarship include competencies covered and outcomes of other related Institutes. Several professional organizations offer training Institutes for mid-managers including, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), the National Student Affairs Personnel Association (NASPA) SERVE Academy, The Harvard Institutes for Higher Education Programs, and the Management Development Program (MDP) at Harvard Graduate School (NASPA, The Harvard Institutes for Higher Education Programs, n.d.). This study also only explored one area of higher education, student affairs. Future research could study other areas including academic affairs units (Deans, Department Heads, and Directors) and assess how prepared they feel to be mid-level managers at their respective levels. Training could target particular functional areas, or cross functional areas but at the same institutional level.

In the current study, all respondents were affiliated with the same professional organization (the Southern Association of College Student Affairs), and therefore, were from the same general region. Extending the research to other geographical regions might diversify experiences and shed new light on potential regional differences. In addition, the majority of the participants were from public institutions. Researching more about the experiences of mid-level managers from private institutions (for example-Historically Black Colleges or Universities) or for-profit institutions (for example-Strayer University) would provide additional insights.

Another opportunity to broaden this study, and ultimately advance scholarship in this area, is to conduct a pre-posttest design with matched sampling. Due to the lack of demographic data available to the researcher, matched sampling and analysis was not able to be performed. Matched sampling would provide for the identification of detailed similarities and differences based on matched variables. Examples include functional area, educational level, or institute
type. Ultimately, this would provide insight on differences among the identified variables in specified groups.

Training and development are defined as, “a process of systematically developing work-related knowledge and expertise for the purpose of improving performance” (Swanson & Holton, 2009, p.456). Literature supports the implementation of leadership development programs as a best practice of training. These programs advanced the skills and abilities of organizational leaders (Braun et al., 2009).

Through this mixed method, case study design, mid-level manager experiences as a result of a short-term intervention were captured. Participants shared that the Institute provided an in-depth professional development learning opportunity that focused on the role of mid-level managers in student affairs. The final model developed in this study can be used to advance scholarship in the area of mid-level manager development in student affairs. Specific skills, relationships, dispositions, and educational level were identified as a result of the Institute’s intervention. As mid-level student affairs managers develop and enhance their skills, relationships, and dispositions, they develop a greater sense of self-efficacy as it pertains to their role and, thus, are better able to provide meaningful contributions as mid-level managers of student services.
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P. Reilly, personal communication, May 10, 2019).


## Appendix A

### Final Institute Post Survey

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<td>I was able to reflect on my personal definition of leadership and how it impacts my role as a mid-manager.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I learned tips for being a successful mid-manager.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>I was able to reflect on how I add value to my organization.</td>
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<td>I have a better understanding of strategic planning and my role in it.</td>
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<td>I was able to reflect on where my unit falls in our university’s strategic plan.</td>
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<td>I better understand current trends in enrollment in higher education and how they relate to budgeting.</td>
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<td>Bolman and Deals' “Reframing Organizations” was an effective tool to help me conceptualize different approaches to an issue.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>I am able to identify strategies to manage supervisors and senior leaders in addition to those whom I supervise.</td>
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<td>I developed an understanding of the important role collaboration plays in accomplishing goals.</td>
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I better understand the complexity of relationships/collaborations that exist and are needed in VP roles, particularly during times of transition.
Appendix B

Structured Interview Questions

1. In what ways do you better understand the role of the mid-manager?
2. What is your personal definition of leadership?
   a. How does it impact your role as a mid-manager?
3. What specific skills did you learn in order to be a successful mid-manager?
4. In what ways do you add value to your organization?
5. What is your role in the strategic planning process?
   a. How do you better understand strategic planning as a result of the Institute?
6. Where does your department fit within your institutional plan?
   a. How is that clearer after attending the Institute?
7. What current trends did you learn about specific to enrollment?
   a. How do these trends relate to the budget process?
8. In what ways can you approach issues and conflict?
9. What specific strategies did you learn for managing supervisors and staff?
10. How does collaboration fit into your role?
    a. How does collaboration fit into institutional goals?
11. What is your understanding of collaborative relationships in student affairs?
    a. What is your understanding of collaboration from a vice president lens?
Appendix C: Informed Consent

Interview Protocol

TITLE
Professional Development for Mid-Managers in Student Affairs: A Case Study Analysis

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Cynthia Tomovic
4115 Education Building Norfolk, VA 23529
757-683-5228
ctomovic@odu.edu

PURPOSE OF STUDY
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

The purpose of this study is to understand how the skills, relationships, and dispositions learned at the Mid-level manager Institute provide you with the ability to make meaningful contributions to the student affairs field. Specifically, this study will focus on your experience at the 2018 Mid-Manager’s Institute at Emory University in Atlanta.

STUDY DESCRIPTION
The interviewer will schedule one on one interviews with participants who volunteer to discuss their experiences from the 2018 Mid-Manager’s Institute. The interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and reported in the aggregate to protect confidentiality of the participants. Interviews will take place either in person or virtually via WebEx software. The research will explore the five institutional themes: (mid-level manager role, cultural competency, strategic planning/budgeting, managing up, and partnership) throughout the interview. Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Your responses to this survey will be anonymous. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents.
- Keeping notes, interview transcriptions, and any other identifying participant information in a locked electronic file in the personal possession of the researcher.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

**CONSENT**

I have read, and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature ____________________________ Date __________

Investigator's signature __________________________ Date __________

Dissertation Chair ______________________________ Date __________
### Appendix D

**Post Ad Hoc Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Moderately Agree</th>
<th>Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a better understanding of the role of a mid-level manager after attending the Institute.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>As a result of the Institute, I was able to reflect on my personal definition of leadership and how it impacts my role as a mid-manager.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>As a result of the Institute, I learned tips for being a successful mid-manager.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was able to reflect on how I add value to my organization after attending the Institute.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have a better understanding of strategic planning and my role in it as a result of attending the Institute.</td>
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<tr>
<td>As a result of the Institute, I was able to reflect on where my unit falls in our university’s strategic plan.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I better understand current trends in enrollment in higher education and how they relate to budgeting as a result of attending the Institute.</td>
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<tr>
<td>As a result of the Institute, Bolman and Deals’ “Reframing Organizations” was an effective tool to help me conceptualize different approaches to an</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
I am able to identify strategies to manage supervisors and senior leaders in addition to those whom I supervise because I attended the Institute.

As a result of attending the Institute, I developed an understanding of the important role collaboration plays in accomplishing goals.

As a result of attending the Institute, I better understand the complexity of relationships/collaborations that exist and are needed in VP roles, particularly during times of transition.
VITA

Sherri N. Watson
1503 Tallwood Circle, Chesapeake, VA 23320
Phone: (757) 652-9337 • Email: sherriwatson26@gmail.com

EDUCATION

**Doctor of Philosophy in Education**
*Program:* Occupational and Technical Studies
*Major:* Business and Industry Training

*Research Interests:* Student Success, Retention, Mid-level Manager Development, Women in Higher Education

Old Dominion University – Norfolk, Virginia

**Master of Arts in Counseling**
Regent University – Virginia Beach, Virginia
CACREP Accredited Program

**Bachelor of Science in Human Services and Communications**
Old Dominion University – Norfolk, Virginia

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Director of Success Coaching & Center for Major Exploration**
Student Engagement and Enrollment Services-Old Dominion University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>August 2017-Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lead the adaptation and merger of the center for major exploration and success coaching into one functional success centered unit.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function as a member of the SEES retention team and streamlined a process for, “Bridge the Gap,” a retention program targeted for first-year students and a webinar series on financial literacy for students with account balances.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Success Advisor/Coach**
Center for Major Exploration-Old Dominion University, 1500 Webb Center, Norfolk, VA 23579

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>June 2014-February 2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Established a campus-wide academic coaching pilot model to individually service and retain the at-risk freshmen cohort.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o <strong>Outcomes: Retained 82.3% of at-risk coaching cohort</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connected students in the at-risk coaching cohort to campus resources and provide support throughout the academic year.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

